

Municipal Library,
NAINI TAL.

Class No. 923

Book No. P 272 O

THE PARNELL OF REAL LIFE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MEMOIRS

RECOLLECTIONS.
EVENING MEMORIES.
AN OLIVE BRANCH IN IRELAND AND ITS HISTORY.
THE IRISH REVOLUTION AND HOW IT CAME ABOUT.
EDMUND BURKE AS AN IRISHMAN.

NOVELS

WHEN WE WERE BOYS.
A QUEEN OF MEN.



Chas. S. Parnell

[Frontispiece

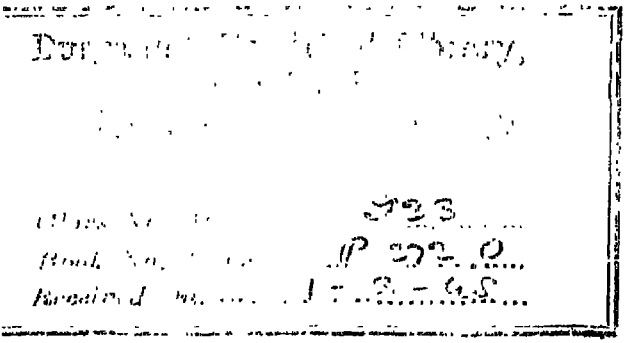
THE PARNELL OF REAL LIFE

By WILLIAM O'BRIEN

"Parnell was cruelly wronged all round. There is a great reaction in England in his favour. I am not altogether without remorse myself."

SIR FRANK LOCKWOOD

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE



First published in 1926

(*All rights reserved*)

PREFACE

A COUPLE of weeks ago *The Times* ranked Gladstone, Gordon, and Parnell as the three outstanding figures of the Victorian era. Parnell is the least known of the three, because his political enemies imagined everything about him except the truth, and he never greatly cared to set them right. It may perhaps be claimed without presumption that *the Parnell of Real Life* here presented is the only one derived from confidential information hitherto unknown in England and not much more conscientiously studied in Ireland—information which is only a partial revelation, surely enough, but one as true to life as the beating of Parnell's pulse. In addition to considerable borrowings from two of my books—*Recollections* and *Evening Memories*—I have to thank the publishers for permission to reproduce articles from *The Nineteenth Century and After*, and from *The English Review*.

MALLOW,
Nov. 15*th*, 1925.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

PARNELL AT FIRST SIGHT 9

CHAPTER II

THE PARNELL OF KILMAINHAM . . . 15

CHAPTER III

PARNELL AGONISTES 49

CHAPTER IV

THE PARNELL OF THE 'EIGHTIES . . 52

CHAPTER V

PARNELL AS CONQUEROR 87

CHAPTER VI

THE PARNELL OF THE HOME RULE BILL . 106

CHAPTER VII

THE PARNELL OF THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN DAYS 123

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VIII

PAGE

THE PARNELL OF THE DIVORCE COURT . 145

CHAPTER IX

PARNELL AND HIS LIBERAL ALLIES . 150

CHAPTER X

PARNELL AND AFTERWARDS . . . 180

THE PARNELL OF REAL LIFE

CHAPTER I

PARNELL AT FIRST SIGHT

THERE is one public event of 1878 which will remain stamped ineffaceably on my memory. It is my first hour of intimate relationship with Parnell. I had already seen him at public meetings, and by the light of Ronayne's hint[1] had easily enough come to discern signs of firmness and greatness under the modest exterior of a Methodist minister on his first circuit. I was now to pass, for the first time, beyond the outer envelope of the man. It will, perhaps, be found most interesting to give my earliest impressions as they were freshly gathered, in a couple of entries in my journal, which

[1] "There is nothing for an Irishman to do in that House of Commons except angle for a place or turn drunkard. I would never enter the place again if it was not for that young man Parnell. Watch him. He will go far" (Mr. Joseph R. Ronayne, M.P. for Cork, one of the most genial and beloved Irishmen of his day).

I had commenced again to keep in this year of 1878, after nearly four years' intermission :

"*Nov.* 15*th*. Routed out at seven this morning to go to Tralee with Parnell and his fiery cross. Joined him in the same carriage from Mallow, and had three hours' astonishingly confidential chat. Coldish reception in Tralee, but no colder than public feeling everywhere about everything just now. Met many old revolutionary and semi-revolutionary friends — Harrington, Mick Power, John Kelly, etc., etc.—and had a cheery all-night sitting at Benners' until four. P. mostly silent, but all alive.

"*Nov.* 16*th*. Parnell addressed a rough-and-tumble meeting, half farmers, half Fenians, with several tipsy interrupters and a preliminary alarm that the floor was giving way. He spoke under cruel difficulties, but fired them all before he sat down. The country is with him, in a half-hearted way, so far as it has any heart in anything.

"*Nov.* 17*th*. Returned by night-mail, and had endless delightful glimpses of P. and of the real man. First, alone in the train from Tralee, then for three hours in Mallow, and then all night long as we travelled up. He has captured me, heart and soul, and is bound to go on capturing. A sweet seriousness *au fond*, any amount of nervous courage, a delicate reserve, without the smallest suspicion of hauteur ; strangest of all, hu-

mour; above everything else, simplicity; as quietly at home with the girls in Mallow as with his turbulent audience in Tralee. We exchanged no end of confidences. As romantic as Lord Edward, but not to be shaken from prosier methods. In any case a man one could suffer with proudly."

Unluckily, I did not commit our conversation to writing in detail; but this first self-revelation of a man who passes for one of the most enigmatic of mankind, yielded me an extraordinarily rich harvest of impressions which, in the course of more than twenty years' intimate experience, I never found reason to change. A few of his opinions and observations are unforgettable. He was immensely interested in my experiences of the difficulties of importing arms or preparing for an insurrection.[1] It was quite clear that his only objection to insurrection was its impracticability. "In '98," he said, "the Wexfordman's pike, in the hands of a strong man, was a better weapon than the redcoat's gun. He could only fire it two or three times in a battle, and he always fired it in a flurry. Nothing could stop a bold pikesman. They might have cleared out the English in '98, even without the French, if all the counties had done as well as Wexford. But that is the trouble of a

[1] My elder brother was actively engaged, with Michael Davitt, in gun-running by the Newport boats in 1868–9.

long-drawn conspiracy in Ireland. The best men got all shut up, and, when the time came, the only solid fight made was made by Wexford, where there was no conspiracy at all."

But since then the situation was wholly changed, as against armed rebellion, by the improvements in firearms (always with him a subject of intense scientific interest), and by the revolution in the proportional population of the two countries. "Ireland," he said, "is too small a country for a rebellion. There is not room enough to run away." There is, perhaps, a spice of his own pungent humour in the remark; but he argued it out as one of the deep truths of Irish public policy. "Washington," he said, "saved America by running away. If he had been fighting in Ireland, he would have been brought to a surrender in six weeks. Nowadays, with the railways, England could sweep the country from Cork to Donegal in six days." He was always specially proud of the fight Michael Dwyer and his band of outlaws made in the Wicklow Mountains, after the Wexford Insurrection was crushed. He knew all Dwyer's haunts in the hills, and more than hinted that his own great ancestor, Sir John Parnell, who lived in the midst of the insurgent country, was denounced to Dublin Castle as one in secret correspondence with the rebels. Curiously enough, the shooting-lodge at Aughavanagh,

in which Parnell yearly spent the grouse season, was a military barrack erected for the extirpation of the rebel chief from the Wicklow Mountains.

Dearly as Parnell loved to coquet with the romance of Irish rebellion, his positive spirit stuck, with characteristic tenacity, to the duller but more effective system of warfare he was himself bringing into practice. The only remark of his which grated upon me was his young man's impatience with Isaac Butt. "Mr. Butt," he said, with one of his softly satirical smiles, "is a Professor." No doubt he laid his finger on the weak spot in Butt's parliamentary strategy. He spoke with the elevation of thought and the veneration for parliamentary institutions of the old Trinity College lecturer on Constitutional Law. The House of Commons listened comfortably, and went to sleep. Mr. Biggar, espying strangers and turning the Prince of Wales out of the Gallery, did more to convince the inert parliamentary intelligence that there was a bitter Irish question than all Butt's genius. "The first thing you've got to do with an Englishman on the Irish question is to shock him," Parnell said. "Then you can reason with him right enough."

I remarked on the apathy of the country, as evinced by his somewhat discouraging experiences in Tralee. "We have not nearly so good an audience in the House of

Commons," he said, with a smile. He was in no wise dismayed for the future. He was, even then, keenly alive to the growth of foreign competition and its inevitable effect in pulling down the high prices which had hitherto averted a collapse of the Irish land system. "If we can bring the extreme men and the farmers to understand one another, we can do anything in that House of Commons." One other characteristic remark, as a revelation of his attitude of mind towards his own landowning class, particularly struck me. We were taking tea with some lady friends of mine in Mallow, and Parnell discovered a great interest in the Duhallow Hunt, whose headquarters were in Mallow, and a minute knowledge of the district as a hunting country. "Yes," said he, "the Duhallows are a fine pack. The only good things the Irish landlords have to show for themselves are their hounds and, perhaps"—he added—"in the Roscommon country, their horses."

CHAPTER II

THE PARNELL OF KILMAINHAM

OCTOBER 1881 was the busiest month of Parnell's career—equally full of difficulties and of triumphs. What was to be done with the Land Act just placed on the statute-book? "The Kilmainham Party"—a group of malcontent "suspects" headed by Mr. Dillon—announced that, if the Act was allowed to be tested, it would break the power of the Land League within six months, and he himself prepared to emigrate to Colorado if the Act was in any way tolerated. Parnell, with a larger vision, proposed neither to disown nor to accept the Act blindfold, but to ascertain how much was to be got out of it by a series of test cases, skilfully prepared and supervised by a still omnipotent League. Gladstone, for his own part, made up his mind that Parnell was the real enemy of the Act, and prepared for an open war against him.

Parnell discussed with studied gentleness the difficulty created by Mr. Dillon. To a few intimates who exhibited, some of them long faces and one of them a sharp tongue,

at Morrison's Hotel, one evening after his return from a defeat at the Tyrone election, he said in his tranquillising way:

"Dillon is in poor health. He has been too much away from us. He will find things will work out all right. Old Gladstone would think it the prettiest compliment paid to his Bill, that it will in a few months extinguish the Land League. The Irish farmer is not such a goose. You might as well think of putting out a fire by pouring paraffin oil on it. This Act won't settle the question. Of course it won't. It proposes to unsettle it every fifteen years, whether we like or no. But so far as it works, it can only help the farmers. It will bankrupt one-third of the landlords, which is more than any No-Rent Campaign of ours could do, and it will make the rest only too happy to be purchased out as an escape from the lawyers. It does not abolish Landlordism, but it will make Landlordism intolerable for the landlords. There is the Act, and you have either to lay hold of it or others will, and crush you. That is the only blunder that could damage the League. Irishmen have a bad habit of talking big, but they are very much obliged to you for not taking them at their word. If we had rejected this Bill, the farmers of Ireland would very properly have chased us out of the country. If we were not to make the best of it now,

the only effect would be that it would be used in spite of us, but that the landlords would get off with half the reductions we can, with judicious handling, knock out of these Land Commissioners."

Although I took no note of his words at the time, there was no forgetting the substance of his unpretentious apophthegms, as, after listening long to more excited counsels, he worried them out slowly and painfully, but with a distinctness on which there was no going back.

But the National Convention was about to assemble, and everybody except Parnell was in a state of some perturbation as to the result. This is not the place to repeat the account of one of the most marvellous stories of moral courage over impulsiveness and unreason to be found in the history of modern democracy. In a huge assembly, apparently in a fever of revolutionary enthusiasm, where not a single speaker was heard to advocate anything but the rejection of the Act, neck and crop, and where Parnell when he rose to speak at the end of the debate, was received with a frozen silence and seemed to have scarcely a partisan left in the National Convention, none even of his parliamentary lieutenants presenting himself to say a word in favour of testing the unpopular Act, the great leader, in a speech of the prosiest good sense, brought

the whole turbulent assembly all but unanimously to his own conclusion. "The Kilmainham Party," who at one moment seemed to dominate the Convention, when the tellers were named for a division, accepted in silent submission the overwhelming show of hands that declared for Parnell's policy.

The next three weeks witnessed a series of scenes which exhibited Parnell at the meridian height of his power as a leader of men. After a few days' rest in his Wicklow home, testing the gold washings of the river that ran through his demesne, or pondering over his pet problems in trigonometry, he made a triumphant entry into Dublin, with a hundred thousand men all but tearing him and one another limb from limb in the paroxysms of their frantic allegiance. It was after midnight when he escaped from their wild embraces. By the morning train he was on his way to a County Convention in Maryborough; the next day he addressed the Central Branch of the Land League; a night afterwards he was at the head of the multitude who welcomed Father Sheehy on his release from Kilmainham Jail; within the same week he was in the midst of the most exciting scene of all, among his own constituents of Cork City, of all the hot Keltic race the hottest in their ecstasies and the most bewitching in their clinging tenderness. In the midst of all this round of

intoxicating excitements, he applied himself steadily to the work of sifting out his test cases for the Land Courts. Before or after one of those speeches, every sentence of which was scanned by hundreds of thousands of hostile eyes, he would break away from the excited admirers who beset his hotel, and shut himself up with some shrewd attorney or cool-headed local captain, working out the intricate particulars of scores of suggested claims, with a view to lighting upon those that would be most likely to eventuate in a satisfactory standard of rent for the different classes of tenancy. Mr. Healy was lavishing all the resources of his indefatigable energy and unequalled knowledge of the Act in directing the corps of solicitors who were spread all over the country selecting appropriate cases. Parnell's two objects of utilising the Act, but of utilising it under the supreme influence of the League, were being accomplished as by some dark wizardry, without gunshots or bloodshed, but with the relentlessness of fate.

It would, indeed, be too much to say that he was not sometimes swept further than he would have cared to go in the contagious heat of the revolution surging around him.

He himself alluded with a good-humoured raillery to the temptation of the moment towards lurid language. "For my part,"

he said, "having been during several years of my political life considerably in advance of the rest of the country, I am exceedingly pleased to find, as the result of my excursions during the last few weeks, that the rest of the country is considerably in advance of me." But wherever the framework of his policy was really touched, it was found to be of adamant. In the midst of the torch-lights and frenzy of his midnight meeting in Dublin, he took care to tell his hearers, "Warned by the history of the past, we know that we must fight this battle within the limits of the Constitution. We shall not permit ourselves for an instant to be tempted beyond our strength."

For a man of Gladstone's constitutional righteousness, this Irishman, tearing down Bastilles and invading Tuileries with a determined reasonableness which gunshots could not pierce nor warrants seize upon, was an enigma wholly unintelligible. For the first time in the collisions of the weak and passionate race with the strong and stolid one, it was the Englishman who lost his head and the Irishman who went on his way with a calmness too self-restrained to be even contemptuous. While, as we have just seen, it took all Parnell's strength to save the Act from summary rejection by followers of his own, who mistook his policy for pusillanimity, he was assailed by Gladstone, on the other hand, as the cold-blooded

politician who was withholding the blessings of the Act from a people thirsting to receive them. In the early days of October the Prime Minister made a speech at Leeds, which made it clear that, far from appreciating and assisting Parnell's moderating influence, he had made up his mind, at the risk of playing the game of the No-Rent school, to force the Irish leader's hand by goading him and the Land League to fight for their lives. A great wave of indignation against the calumnies and threats of the Leeds speech swept the Irish nation to its depths. Again it took the all but imperturbable self-restraint of the Irish chief to hold down the passions he was supposed in England to be letting loose. Two days afterwards he was in Wexford, in presence of scenes that would have overheated the brain of, perhaps, any other man of his generation. His Wexford speeches had the touch of fire that thrilled the country, but were above all else characterised by a provoking coolness, a merciless strength of argument, and a suspicion of contempt for the thunders of his angry antagonist that gave him most decidedly the best of the duel with the mighty orator to whom he was replying. He dismissed Gladstone's *post-mortem* tributes to the statesmanship of O'Connell and Butt, in contrast with their degenerate descendants, with the remark: "In the opinion of English statesmen, no

man is good in Ireland until he is dead and buried, and unable to strike a blow for Ireland"; adding, with a note of gaiety not without its sad prescience: "Perhaps the day may come when even I may get a good word from English statesmen as a moderate man—after I am dead and buried." He had no difficulty in showing that on two separate occasions it was the vote of the Irish Party that saved the Bill they were now taunted with conspiring against. Time has wholly vindicated his plea that it was only by cautious trial, and not by unconditional acceptance, the Act could be made to produce even a tolerable alleviation of an incurable system.

The villainous imputation of sympathy with crime he waved aside with a gesture too haughty for more than a word of cold and biting scorn. He quoted with terrific force Gladstone's confession that "the Government had no moral force behind them in Ireland"; far from replying to the gasconade of increased coercion by any gasconade of his own, he said of the Leeds threats, "These are very brave words that he uses, but it strikes me that they have a ring about them like the whistle of a schoolboy on his way through a churchyard at night"; and, looking across the waste of bitter coercion and reprisals now before the country, he wound up with the anticipation —calm, almost business-like, but sure as if

his tongue had been touched with the Hebrew prophet's coal of fire—that Gladstone would yet eat his brave words, and recognise "that England's mission in Ireland has been a failure, and that Irishmen have established their right to govern Ireland by laws made by themselves, for themselves, upon Irish soil."

Never, surely, was the whirlwind more victoriously ridden. For the next week he shut himself up with Mr. Healy and the lawyers, perfecting his test cases. The popular strength was already sufficiently solidified. Could he have chosen, he would have preferred to make no further speeches until the new Land Courts had shown their quality for good or ill. But even to the curb of such a rider the whirlwind will not always respond. The Conventions and mass meetings went on with ever-increasing fervour. One memorable night's conversation at Morrison's Hotel gave me for the first time a startling glimpse of Parnell's own anxieties lest he should be driven further than he thought wise, and thus give Forster some pretext for his manifest determination to get the League, at all hazards, out of the way of the new Land Courts. Parnell had addressed a great Convention of the county of Kildare during the day, and was finishing his chop in the midst of an excited group of Members of Parliament, organisers, and priests in the fireless private room which

he engaged on very rare occasions at Morrison's. He spoke scarcely at all, but with his head graciously bent forward, his ears attentive, and his eyes modestly fixed on the fireplace, as was his wont, listened with an air of respectful deference to the words of wisdom poured in upon him. It was this habit of patient and long-suffering attention, even to the loquacity of bores, which led shallow people to impute to him weakness, and a readiness to take the first suggestion offered to him in an hour of emergency. I know at least two persons who are convinced that it was the ideas they broached to him in the train going down which Mr. Parnell appropriated almost *literatim* in his speech at Wexford. It was only when the noisier portion of the company had filtered out, and only two or three intimates were left, that Parnell began to speak. To my amazement (for I was quite as hot as the hottest in the transports of the revolutionary fever of the hour) he spoke with considerable alarm, and even with some vexation, of the lengths to which some people were pushing him.

He announced that he would attend no more public meetings for the present, and that he would not go to jail. He unquestionably had a peculiar shrinking from solitary confinement. Certain hereditary traditions of his family history would largely account for the gloom with which any allusion to

the subject always filled him. But no friend whose opinion was worth having could ever have suspected him of allowing his political calculations to be regulated by any apprehension of his own. He was one of the slowest of mankind to go into a position of danger, but, once in it, Leonidas was not more unshakable at his post. "This old gentleman is in a temper," he said; "he will let Buckshot do as he likes, and if you want to know what coercion can be, just try a Quaker. No, they will suppress the League, and snap us all up, and where will your No-Rent gentlemen be then?" A member of the Executive, who, a few days afterwards, when the proclamation suppressing the Land League appeared, departed for his country home and was not further heard of in the movement, made some remark to show his contempt for coercion.

"Mr. ——," said Parnell, with very unusual severity, "I daresay you were born to be crucified. I was not. I am for winning something for the country all the time. It is the best way of winning more. It is always the way in Ireland," he said, speaking slowly as if in reverie that nobody cared to interrupt. "See how they pushed O'Connell to talk such rubbish in his Mallow Defiance. It was sillier than anything of our own," he said, with a gleam of malicious humour. Then very gravely: "It was the end of him. And how quietly those young

warrior gentlemen took it for five years, while the poor old man was dying off. I daresay O'Connell was a bit off his head when he made his Mallow Defiance." Whereupon we fell a-debating the old controversy, *Young Ireland* v. *Old Ireland*, Parnell holding largely with O'Connell, who had difficulties of which the self-confident "young men" knew not, but appraising higher than any of the Young Irelanders Fintan Lalor, who alone had a workable plan. If there had been railways then to enable him to travel over the country, and any means of getting him the ear of the people, Lalor might have anticipated the Land League by thirty years, and produced a very respectable rebellion which could not well have been worse for the country than the Famine.

We parted late, with an understanding that he was to leave the country in a few days for, I think, a continental holiday, after giving the final touch to the preparations for lodging the test cases. The hall porter was snoring heavily on his bench when we awakened him to let us out. The Post Office clock struck two when three of us broke off our final excited colloquy at the corner of O'Connell Bridge. At six o'clock the porter at Morrison's was called up to receive a visit from Mr. Mallon, the Chief of the Dublin Detective Division, with a warrant for the arrest of Parnell as one "reasonably suspected of treasonable practices."

The porter managed to keep the detectives in the hall while he communicated the ill news to Parnell in his bedroom. He told him every servant in the house would die for him, and pointed out a passage among the chimney-pots over which he could easily reach the attic window of a neighbouring friendly house. "Thanks, no—I don't think so," was the reply, after what seemed a moment of deliberation. "Kindly bid them wait below," he added, issuing his order to the detectives with a hauteur of which his own servants never knew a trace. He was prodigiously angry. Chief Mallon, like most Irish officials not wholly corrupted, had a good deal of the original Nationalist mingled with the instincts of the detective officer. He veiled his eyes deferentially before a Chief mightier than he. Parnell told us that one of the detectives, a great red-bearded fellow, in the hall, staggered and looked faint. His first thought was that he had been drinking, but he soon saw it was emotion quite unmixed. It was one of the not more than half a dozen occasions in his life when Parnell showed either temper or haughtiness. The detectives dared not speak, or scarcely look, while on the way to Kilmainham Jail. I am certain they would have turned the horse's head about and driven where he ordered them, had he chosen to intimate a wish. His observation to some friend on the way to the prison, "Tell

the Irish people I will consider they have not done their duty if I am soon released," might have told anybody less infatuated than Forster what was coming. But it was only after reaching Kilmainham, when the prison officers proposed to go through the usual form of searching him, that the pent-up fires burst forth. "How dare you?" he cried, starting back, his arms drawn up convulsively, every muscle in his body hardening to steel. The unfortunate official was ready to sink under the flags. We afterwards asked Parnell what he should have done if the head warder had persisted. "I should have killed him!" he said in a nervous whisper, between his teeth. Then, after a moment, with one of his pleasant smiles, "Poor old Searle, how he would have been surprised!"

The Greek Chorus would have had here as sombre a theme as Æschylus could have devised for them as to the everlasting tragedy of things. Here were two men, of colossal power, and as to the fundamental realities of the Irish situation really at one, who were nevertheless set hopelessly at cross purposes. Gladstone, who hated coercion, gave Forster *carte blanche* in his moment of maddest conviction that force was the only remedy. In his passion for securing a fair trial for his Land Act, he put an end to all chance of a fair trial. Parnell, who desired nothing better than to test the Act in a

manner which, everybody now knows, would have doubled the fair fruits of the Act, and made the inevitable transition to the abolition of Landlordism a swift and crimeless one, was turned from the Land Courts into the prison, where there was only one weapon left to him. He and his chief lieutenants were collected together into a new and vaster Kilmainham Party, where it ought to have been the first care of statesmanship to discredit the old one. Fierce a stab as the arrest of Parnell aimed at the heart of Ireland, the terms of almost insolent triumph in which the Premier announced it in the London Guildhall did still more to raise Irish feeling to white heat.

It was as if the Germans had not contented themselves with entering Paris, without scattering the bones of Napoleon in the Invalides. The initial blunder of Gladstone and Forster was their belief that Parnellism was a tyranny, for ridding them of which the Irish people would be secretly thankful. The next six months were, on the contrary, to bear tragic witness that the Government had let loose the most terrific storm of national protest ever raised by a disarmed people—a storm which they could only finally appease by suing for peace to their own prisoner. From every corner of the island there rose up a cry of anguish and of wrath. In Cork City the shops were instantly shut up in mourning. The Tipperary Land

League raised the shout which was soon in every throat, that the test cases must be abandoned, and no rent be paid until Parnell's release. Even a man so little inclined to headstrong passion as Mr. J. E. Redmond declared in Wexford: "Yesterday we were willing to test the Act; to-day it is our duty to trample upon it. Until Parnell is released I say it is the duty of the people to strike against all rent!" At a special meeting of the Executive of the Land League, a firm resolution was shown to go on steadily upon the lines prescribed by Parnell and approved by the National Convention. But the continuation of the policy of testing the Act was just what Forster had resolved, at any cost of civil war, to prevent. The next morning Mr. Sexton,[1] who was in principal charge of the Head Offices; Mr. J. P. Quinn, the Assistant Secretary; and Mr. W. Doris, the Second Assistant Secretary, were all carried off to prison, thus completely dismembering the staff charged with the preparation of the test cases. A still more ominous sign was the aggressive display of immense forces of police around the neighbourhood of the public meeting of protest held the same night in the Rotunda. Forster's armed forces marched and countermarched and challenged with the unmistakable air of men spoiling for a fight. The

[1] Mr. Sexton was ill in bed when arrested, and was released after a few days.

"whiff of grape-shot" policy was manifestly the *consigne* from the Castle.

The midnight council of the Executive separated at the Imperial Hotel without coming to any decision, upon a letter of Parnell intimating that no other resource was left except a No-Rent Campaign. As we separated, the street outside was a scene of mad excitement, the police charging through the crowds with a fury that nothing except the fear of an armed insurrection could explain. At ten o'clock the next morning, as I was turning into the *Freeman* office to inquire as to the rumoured arrest of Mr. O'Kelly, I was arrested myself on a warrant alleging me to be "reasonably suspected of treasonable practices." Almost every remaining man connected with the direction of the movement was struck at during the day. Mr. Dillon, whom Gladstone had only a week previously beslobbered with his praises, was rearrested in the afternoon—nominally on a warrant charging him with inciting to the non-payment of rent, but really, as it was concluded in every cabin in Ireland, because he had foiled English state-craft in its manœuvres to set Parnell and himself at daggers drawn in this hour of trial. All through the day squadrons of dragoons were kept prancing about the streets of Dublin; infantry were massed on the quays; military bugles were kept sounding—either in a nervous panic

or in the determination to strike terror once for all to the nation's heart, and have done with it. Mr. Forster took every measure to exasperate the public anger, which a wiser strategy would have taught him to mollify. When night came great masses of policemen were unloosed recklessly, and with an extraordinary ferocity, in the crowded streets; the defenceless people were treated with such barbarity that a deputation of the Corporation waited upon the Chief Secretary to implore him to hold his hand, and were answered with the somewhat brutal apophthegm: "Clearing the streets is no milk-and-water matter." From that night a city which had not been for many years stained with a crime of blood became the easy prey of the secret societies, and was soon the seat of the most desperate conspiracy that ever shook the nerves of English officials in Ireland.

My own first sensation after arrest was that of a blissful calm, as of one who had passed by a sudden death into a region of eternal rest. Practically every number of the paper up to the date of my arrest was written by myself from start to finish.

Parnell's first greeting to me, as I entered the prison yard, was characteristic and dispelled my dreams of a haven of rest. "O'Brien, of all men in the world, you are the man we wanted," he said; and with the chuckle with which he always passed off

a quotation, as if it were a successful joke: "*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit!*" And he begged of me during the dinner-hour to draft a No-Rent Manifesto.

.

Dr. Joe Kenny, whom, after St. Paul's faithful companion, we used to call "the beloved physician," and whom his friend Adams, in one of his sallies as a "chartered libertine," used to stigmatise as "that mad Fenian apothecary," was the assiduous and (needless to say to anyone who knew him) the unfee'd medical attendant of the Kilmainham prisoners, until he became one of the Kilmainham prisoners himself, and, indeed, afterwards. He had effected an arrangement with the prison authorities by which six or eight of us were concentrated in the hospital wing of the prison. After a time we were allowed to move about freely, and even to mess together in the room which, so long as a stone stands upon a stone of Kilmainham, will be known as "Mr. Parnell's room." Here Messrs. Parnell, O'Kelly, Dillon, Brennan, Kenny, Kettle, and myself met in the afternoon to debate the No-Rent Manifesto. Quite after his character of a man of action, Parnell, who had resisted firmly the resort to extreme measures so long as an experimental test of the Act was still possible, was now the most resolute for their adoption. No less characteristically,

some, who in their revolutionary zeal would have killed off Gladstone's Land Act from its birth, now hesitated at the call for an immediate decision. It is highly probable that there was a note of personal resentment at his arrest in Parnell's determination to retaliate with a No-Rent Movement, as there was no less probably on Gladstone's part when he directed the arrest of the strategist he had failed to answer otherwise.

His imprisonment had hurt Parnell's pride to a degree that made reprisals sweet to him. But his ruling motive in passing the word for the No-Rent War assuredly was that the removal of every man who could give effect to his own policy left him no alternative except to accept the ignominious extinction of the Land League without striking a blow, and thus leave the country unconditionally at the mercy of a confessedly defective Act in the hands of weak or hostile administrators. Also, he seemed considerably impressed by an argument which I did not fail to present to him, that the country had been so long taught to regard a No-Rent Movement as practicable and irresistible, that, if it were not tested now under every possible circumstance of justification and of high and indignant national spirit to sustain it, the conclusion would be that a matchless opportunity had been lost; and woe to the Irish leader with whom the white feather is

discovered, or even suspected! Parnell was not in the least afraid to be thought afraid, but he understood the practical bearing of the argument. He did not believe that the advice to the Irish tenants to endure evictions rather than pay their rents would be generally obeyed; but he anticipated that it would be obeyed on a sufficient scale to exercise upon the new Land Courts the same wholesome influence as the test cases, and to make the government of the country by Forster's ruthless coercive methods impossible. Events so abundantly justified his calculation that he, over whose committal to Kilmainham Prison the worthy common councilmen of the London Guildhall shouted as over a fallen and beaten man, quitted Kilmainham as a conqueror over the body of his fallen and beaten jailer.

The period of repose, in the hope of which I welcomed the cells of Kilmainham, proved to be one of the most laboriously active passages of a pretty active life. But it was sweetened by an exhilaration of combat and a companionship with revered and trusty men, and, it must be added, a rugged courtesy on the part of our captor, which leave me scarcely a single memory of those six prison months that it is not a personal luxury to recall. I brought to Kilmainham perhaps as unlimited a store of faith in human nature, of admiration for goodness,

courage, and capacity, wherever and in whatever varying phases it was to be found, and of incapacity to see the base side or the sceptical side of men, or movements, as, I think, most men are blessed with. If such a disposition in a world of cross-purposes, and especially in an Irish world of excessive expectation and excessive disappointment, is only too sure to bring its crop of disillusions, the only change of which even the experiences of two Irish civil wars has made me conscious is the substitution for an unlimited belief in human nature of an unlimited pity for the inexorable destiny of us all. If to know one is to live with one, to live with one within prison walls daily for six months ought to leave little for experience to discover; and I can say with a very clear conscience as to the men with whom it was my privilege to be in daily, almost hourly, contact during all these months of trial, that I left Kilmainham with a higher admiration, affection, and, it might well be said, reverence for them all than even the plentiful stock I had begun with. Mr. Forster's prison arrangements were unquestionably humane. All the prisoners were allowed to mingle together freely in the prison yards during the abundant hours of exercise; to smoke their pipes, to read their newspapers, to play at hand-ball, or, if their tastes were more sedentary, at chess or dominoes, and to have their meals supplied by a friendly

restaurateur (or, as it happened, *restaurateuse*).

It has been mentioned that six or eight of us were lodged together in "a concentration camp," of which Parnell's room was the dining-room and the club-window. It has often been a matter of bitter regret that I took no notes of our *noctes cænæque* around the Chief's frugal table. At the time, and for many a year after, anything I might put in writing was liable to seizure and official scrutiny, with the unfortunate result that my diaries were kept mostly in uneventful periods when they were least useful. Not, indeed, that Parnell was in the smallest degree a professor of table-talk. He would have been the last to understand Dr. Johnson's passion for "talking for victory." He was much more truly an admirer of Biggar's immortal axiom of obstruction: "Never talk except in Government time." At table, as everywhere else, he was simple, genial, unpretentious. But he was in the habit of dropping pregnant sayings, for any record of which surer than my own memory I would now give much. It was a pleasant little company. Mr. Dillon was a book-lover, well read in travels and biography, and a gentle and refined companion; Mr. O'Kelly had a provoking way of never affording more than a glimpse of his treasures of romance, in connection with the Algerian and Mexican wars, but he ever

loved to construct ingenious schemes of foreign complications, which would bring about the assured downfall of England—if they would only come off; Dr. Kenny supplied the easy gaiety and cementing gift which make the social world go round; and Mr. Brennan filled in the background with a certain air of mystery and reticence suggestive of the French Revolution without its noise. Our feasts were plain, but they sufficed. The farmers, who at this time stopped the landlords from hunting, as a measure of reprisal, started "Land League hunts" of their own, and usually sent their bags by way of presents to the suspects. Hare soup, in consequence, became so frequent an item of our menu, that the dainty moved us to as ungrateful reflections as the "toujours perdrix" of the French royal epicure.

There was no subject on which Parnell better loved to chat than America and the American Revolution. He would delight to trace Washington through his constant retreats and devices for avoiding battle, holding that to his willingness to decamp and play an inglorious waiting-game it was due that the insurrection was not promptly suppressed by the troops. "Washington would be a highly unpopular leader in Ireland," he would say, with a smile. For the United States of our day, bursting with youthful energy and rude strength, he had

the admiration of one who was half American by blood and five-sixths in sympathy. He would always topple over Mr. O'Kelly's calculations of disaster to England from France or Russia with the observation: "Pooh! The United States are the only people that could smash England. They may even be the means of freeing Ireland without the smashing." Once somebody was speaking slightingly of Robert Emmet's insurrection. "Emmet was not such a fool as many foolish people think," Parnell observed. "There was Napoleon with his Army of England cooling their heels at Boulogne. Any success in Ireland might have decided him to cross. Emmet's idea of striking at the Castle to begin with was a good one. He might have done better without bothering about uniforms; but going for the Castle right away is the only sensible way of beginning in Ireland. The plan at the Fenian Rising of marching away from the towns was not business; but of course the Fenians never had a chance after '65." He told us that his grandfather, who lived in Wicklow all through the insurrection of '98, and might easily enough have been hanged himself as a rebel, used to say that if a certain colonel of cavalry, who offered to take possession of Dublin Castle with his regiment for the insurgents, had been listened to, Cornwallis and the rest might have been seized; and if Grattan

had had the grit, he might have made an excellent bargain for ending the insurrection by a treaty reforming the Irish Parliament.

Parnell's superstitions have been frequently and unduly dwelt upon. They always seemed to me whimsicalities that amused him, rather than beliefs that had any real influence. His objection to travelling in a railway carriage number 13, or any multiple of 13, would undoubtedly have caused him to prefer travelling in a third class of an unobjectionable number to travelling in a first class marked with the brand of ill-luck. For that matter, if somebody led him to a third-class compartment, be the number what it might, I doubt whether Parnell would particularly notice whether it was in a first-class or a third-class carriage he was travelling. What is quite certain is, that any possible combination of thirteens would not have deterred him from completing his journey. His objection to the colour green, again, was genuine, and often laughable; but arose, in my judgment, chiefly from a fear of arsenical poisoning. "How could you expect a country to have luck that has green for its colour!" he once said. When I reminded him that green, as the national colour, dated no further back than the United Irishmen, and that until then the Irish ensign was supposed to be blue, he responded smiling: "It's just the same—blue is more than half green." A

lady worked for him, while he was in prison, a superb eider-down quilt, covered with green satin, with his monogram worked in gold bullion—a present worthy of a king. I am sure he must have sent a sweet and gracious acknowledgment, but the gorgeous quilt never rested on his bed. It was hidden away carefully underneath a press, where, I am afraid, the mice soon tarnished its glory. Lady devotees sent him innumerable other marks of homage worked in the dangerous colour—embroidered smoking-caps, tea-cosies, and even bright green hosiery. The latter he insisted resolutely on destroying; the others he distributed freely among his brother-prisoners, until almost every man in the prison, except himself, had his green tasselled turban and green woollen vests. Very different was his appreciation of the red and yellow flowered silk eider-down dressing-gown presented and manufactured by his own constituents in Cork, which he wore throughout his imprisonment, free from all apprehension of ill-luck or poison. His terror of contagious disease was very real indeed. One evening, I happened to mention at dinner that I had got a note informing me that two of my sub-editor's children were down with scarlatina. "My God! O'Brien," he cried, almost in a panic, "what did you do with the letter?" When I told him it was still in my pocket he begged of me instantly to

throw it into the fire. Seeing how genuine was his concern, I did so. "Now," said he, "wash your hands." This time I found it difficult to avoid smiling. He bounded from the dinner-table, and with his own hands emptied the water-ewer into the basin on the washhand-stand. "For God's sake, O'Brien, quick!" he cried, holding out the towel towards me, with an earnestness that set the whole company in a roar. He returned to his dinner in a state of supreme satisfaction. "Buckshot," he said, "is not going to get rid of us so cheaply as that."

We were pretty plentifully supplied with books. Parnell's first thought for his own amusement was a carpenter's bench and tools. It must be owned that they would have outstripped all the poets, novelists, and sages in his favour. But the Prisons' Board, somehow, did not like the notion of arming their distinguished prisoner with hand-saws and cold chisels. Failing the carpenter's bench, he dipped into an occasional book of history or Roman law, and always extracted solid fruit from it; but, he used to say, "literature has no chance against the *Freeman*." Another indication of his mechanical genius recurs to me. A rich Irishman in Liverpool, Mr. Pat Byrne, presented him with a magnificent musical-box, from which could be ground out five Irish Rebel airs. He delighted for a few days—not, I think, from any passion

for music—to wind up the musical-box to play "The Wearing of the Green" while we were at dinner. After a very few days the moderate cravings of his musical soul were satisfied. One morning we found him artistically taking the costly toy to pieces to examine its machinery, and he found considerably more comfort in explaining to us, by the order and character of the nicks on the brass cylinder, how the sweet sounds were produced than he had ever found in the tinkling melodies themselves. His method as a chess-player was characteristic. He took a bold, quick offensive, and, before his antagonist could tell what he was at, had landed a piece on the opposite side of the board, a-straddle between the opponent's castle and queen. A risky game, but an amazingly successful one, like his political career. Strangely enough, the most dangerous antagonist he found amongst all his brother-prisoners was a little Mayo peasant lad named Nally, who, until his committal to prison, had never seen a chess-board, but who often countered the Chief's dashing strategy by his own slow, watchful cunning; and Parnell's temper never showed sweeter than when he was mated by the small Mayo peasant boy.

His interest in the mechanical took another practical turn. All through the winter rumours were constantly circulating of the removal of the principal suspects for trial in

England. Parnell was constantly haunted by the belief that that would be Mr. Forster's last desperate move, and that, if tried, it would be successful, in the existing state of English prejudice, in procuring certain conviction and unscrupulous sentences. He had made up his mind to escape from prison, if the danger of being kidnapped to England should become imminent. I think it was to Mr. Brennan—always an adept diplomatist in such matters—that he owed several opportunities of examining the prison keys. It was a labour of love to him to take impressions of the keys, whose different compartments and intricacies had for him the charm a painter might find in the *gribouillage* of some Old Master. In a short time a set of keys were manufactured for him by a Dublin locksmith from his models, and he was ever after happy with the knowledge that any night he pleased he might walk out of Kilmainham without any serious danger of interruption.

I have often been asked what were Parnell's religious views, without being able very accurately to reply. Every Sunday morning regularly, at the hour of Protestant divine service, the head warder presented himself with the stereotyped inquiry, "Are you for service to-day, Mr. Parnell?" To which, after a minute of deliberation, as if not desiring to kill off all hope in the soul of the head warder, would come the invariable

reply, "No, I don't think so—not to-day." And we remarked, as all the commentators do of Governor Festus' promise to give St. Paul another hearing at an opportune time, that, for Parnell as for Festus, "the opportune time" never arrived. The Protestant prison chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Fleming, betimes paid him a visit in his room, and was always received with a somewhat frigid courtesy; but Parnell had somehow got it into his head that the name was Fletcher, not Fleming, and he would persist in dubbing the chaplain ceremoniously "Mr. Fletch—aw," until the poor man gave up all hope of getting his catechumen so far as even conceding his own name to him. With the Catholic chaplain, Canon Kennedy, he was on much friendlier terms. The dear old gentleman would stay gossiping with him by the hour, on every topic except religion, and found it so hard to take himself off that he sometimes stood glued to the floor, irresolutely rapping his thumb-nail against his teeth, until the clang of the prison bell, or the irruption of a warder, put an end to the interview. On religious topics Parnell was closely reserved, and never disrespectful. Catholicism was the only form of religion for which I ever knew him to betray any tenderness. Long afterwards, when, in the smoking-room of the House of Commons, we were reading of the execution of Joe Brady and Tim Kelly for the Phœnix Park

murders, he remarked very gravely, "The Catholic Church is the only one that can make a man die with any real hope." The only positive opinion I ever heard him drop was once, after I had been inveighing against the insolent cruelty of the atomic theories, which Tyndall had at the time brought into vogue, and insisting what a gloomy farce they would reduce human life to without the promise of immortality. He said softly, and with something like a sigh, "The only immortality a man can have is through his children." On one evening which I spent with him in his home in Avondale, we walked out by Moore's Meeting of the Waters, which lay at the foot of his demesne, luxuriating in the glories of a starlight night. Astronomy was one of his strong points—especially questions of the measurement of distances. He knew all the latest discoveries in the galaxy, and pointed out in what particular pinch of star dust, if my poor sight could discern it, some new asteroid was situate. From these excursions into the infinite heavens he warmed into wonder at the design, and, as I thought, into a reverential homage to the Designer, such as I had never seen him exhibit in so all but rapturous a degree before. He suddenly cut short the reverie with the remark, pointing to the millions of worlds in the blue, "We're a bit cheeky, aren't we, to take it for granted it is all for us on this

absurd little ball of earth?" and proceeded to explain to me the instruments by which the astronomers calculate distances and magnitudes. He would not let me lead him back to the reflection that the human genius which discovered these things was an even better argument for an immortal spirit than the marvels of the starry universe.

Early on the morning of the 17th of April the Governor of the prison came into my cell to announce my release. He begged of me to hurry if I was to see my mother alive.

.

Some time early in April Parnell made a notable observation to me, which was accompanied with one of his brightest smiles: "Don't pitch into me too hard, O'Brien, if, like Micky Calligy, I sign conditions and go out!" Micky Calligy was a poor Western peasant who was supposed to have purchased his liberation by signing a promise of better behaviour. It was the first hint I got of the Kilmainham Treaty, beyond the knowledge that Parnell's mind was running constantly on the necessity for some *modus vivendi*.

A week or two afterwards the people of Dublin awoke on the 3rd of May to learn that Messrs. Parnell, Dillon, and O'Kelly had been released from prison the previous evening, had secretly got aboard the Holyhead mail-boat, and departed without saying a

word or making a sign; and a day or two afterwards Mr. Michael Davitt was set free from Portland Prison. Parnell had, as he jokingly anticipated, "signed conditions like Micky Calligy," but they were the conditions of a treaty which recognised Forster's prisoners as the conquerors and left the unlucky Chief Secretary, armed with all the power of the Empire, a dismissed and broken man.

CHAPTER III

PARNELL AGONISTES

After the Kilmainham triumph, the deluge —for years, slow-moving as eternities, overspreading our Irish earth with ruin, calumny, foul play, and coercion with hot pincers. Who ever heard Parnell moan over all those things or over any of those things? It is not necessary to enlarge upon the Phœnix Park murders to Parnell's glory, much less to the dishonour of anybody except his foes. For one thing, he always liked to think Englishmen learned more of the history of Ireland from the shock than they ever did since their half cousins the Normans landed there. There was only one thing more beastly than the murders, and that was the attempt to saddle Parnell with the crime: yet it was for years the settled faith of Englishmen in millions. For that crime of a people, too, he received perhaps the most overwhelming reparation a libelled man ever wrung from the haughtiest of the nations. The pity is that Parnell's degenerate party let ten years pass, while they were masters of the Government of England, without expunging from the roll of Parliament a

record which is too malicious to be repentant and too pusillanimous to be ready to repeat the offence.

The gates of Kilmainham Jail had been thrown open to him, as to one to whose eyes were already vouchsafed vistas of Irish Independence in one dazzling stretch of freedom after another, and lo! unknown murderers, not even guessing whom they had murdered, broke the heavens in pieces over his head, and seemed to have banished his dreams and himself deeper than the depths of Kilmainham for ever from the eyes of men. As if that were not enough, thousands of villainous witnesses were brigaded and money enough to wage a war of some extent was spilled out until it seemed as if every scoundrel of the wide Irish race was subsidised and pampered by respectable English gentlemen in the hope of spattering some stain of guilt on the Irish leader. Even here, indeed, Parnell's revenge has come after him: some of us have lived to see the hereditary hater of the Irish Cause—the paper that cut out their work for the Three Judges—turned to one of its most potent ministers.

There was, it is true, always an undertone of the comic in Parnell's asides in regard to the Commission Court. He tried harder to dissuade Sir Charles Russell from making his famous speech (it seemed so stale after Pigott!) than he perhaps did to intermeddle

at any other stage of the proceedings. He certainly worried less in terror over the machinery of the Parnell Commission Court —tremendously though it overhung him and threatened to crush him—than he did over the collapse of the Kilmainham Treaty and the hard fate of having to begin all over again from the bottom. While he never held danger too cheap, contempt would be the language he should by preference use if the language of contempt were made for use, which for him it never was. Exteriorly, he was as calm as the most austere of the Three Judges. Altogether the dignity with which he bore these two visitations—the completeness with which assassins striking in the darkness at the most inoffensive of men, and the proud man stripped naked and made to bear the stripes of all his race upon his back—were enough for greatness amongst the honours of his life, and would scarcely be exceeded, I think, among the greatest performances of Greek or Roman Stoics.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARNELL OF THE 'EIGHTIES

PARNELL has always been described as "an elusive personality" both by those who had not the wit to understand him and by those who did not deserve to be admitted to his confidence. The truth is, that the fault lay with themselves, and not with him. He was at the core simplicity itself. "I have never been a Parnellite," he once smilingly remarked, and it was true of his contempt both for self-introspection and for the squalors of political faction-fighting.

He was not Irish, was the comforting thought of Englishmen whom he beat on their own ground of icy coolness and passionless plainness of speech. "I have always envied the member for Cork," Gladstone once owned in the House of Commons with a rueful countenance, "his gift for saying precisely what he wants to say—neither a word more, nor a word less." It was so little Irish!

English members who in the early Obstruction conflicts saw him ordered to discontinue his speech and withdraw while the House was considering his suspension, and when he

was invited back into a House still boiling with excitement heard him resume his speech at the very sentence at which he left off with the words: "As I was remarking, Mr. Speaker, when I was interrupted"—could make nothing of an Irish leader with less than themselves of the Keltic excitability or quarrelsomeness, or (so they pleased to put it) rant. There was some consolation, such as it was, in the taunt that Parnell was not a pure-bred Gael; no, but still less was there a trait of Anglo-Saxonism in his face, his temper, his mentality, or anything that was his. The outward masque he derived from his American ancestry with his impassiveness, his invulnerability of chilled steel, his keenness for the practical side of things, and his undoubted if deeply submerged sense of humour; Parnell had no more natural temptation to claim kinship with England than his grandfather Stewart —the old Ironsides of the American War—had to weep for the fate of the English frigates that his good cutlass and his grappling-irons were chasing from the seas. No American had any difficulty in understanding Parnell. "I have come to see the man who has made John Bull listen," Wendell Philipps, the celebrated orator, one night said in the Faneuil Hall in Boston. We may be sure that in the qualities which enabled this quiet gentleman to break the Parliament of England instead of the Parlia-

ment of England breaking him, Wendell Philipps saw more family resemblance with the idealism of Abe Lincoln, the lath-splitter of the backwoods and the glory of the Western Hemisphere, than with a pragmatism of the Anglo-Saxon breed.

But with all that, and beyond all that, Parnell was as Irish as the voices of the rivers of Moore's "Meeting of the Waters" as they sang their way through the woods of his own demesne at Avondale. It took two centuries of penal legislation to prevent the Parnells from becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves—if even then the Gaelic magic did not prevail. There is no anti-Irishman of the name on record. His mother entertained a hatred of England heated to the point of fanaticism. Her house in Merrion Square was a favourite resort of the Irish-American officers who swarmed over to captain the Fenian Insurrection. The place was under the constant supervision of the police. I have heard Parnell say that the first (and I suspect the last) time he ever found himself singing was when he joined the heady chorus of Michael Scanlan's "Out and make way for the Fenian men!" as it was roared by the bronzed soldiers of the Civil War in his mother's dining-room. It was there, too, he first saw his predecessor in the Irish leadership, Isaac Butt, large part of whose fees for the defence of the Fenian men, it

may safely be guessed, came from Mrs. Parnell's pocket. England would be wise to note the fact that it was this contact with the much-reviled Fenian filibusters which settled the destinies of the old Protestant Tory man of genius and of the young Protestant squire from Cambridge as apostles of Irish Nationality.

Those who picture Parnell to themselves as a man without imagination deceive themselves by forgetting that his imagination lived chiefly in those worlds of Science which in the Victorian days were, even in the dreams of the Ruskins and the Brownings, the high heaven of Poetry. The man whose lonely evenings at Aughavanagh were passed in working out problems of the measurement of the mountains and the stars—of whom Mr. Morley tells us that, while the House of Commons was panting to hear him on the Pigott forgeries, he left the House to superintend some chemical assay of his alluvial gold deposits at Avondale—was not the kind of person to put his thoughts in mellow metres. It is none the less true that it was not for nothing that a gentle poet was—shall we say before, or next to himself?—the most shining ornament of his house. For the mere tools or tricks of poetry he cared no more than a blind man for pictures. On the rare occasions when he quoted verses, it was as though he were making a joke, and he had them generally topsy-turvy.

Once when he ventured upon Moore's hackneyed vision of Ireland:

> "Great, glorious and free,
> First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea."

he blundered at the close into a stammered

> "First flower of the earth,
> and first—ah!—jewel of—ah!—the ocean."

"'Gem,' Parnell, not 'jewel,'" whispered one of his colleagues. "Don't you think 'jewel' is a better word?" he replied with entire complacency. But poetry is not a thing of tinsel or of jingling words. His choice for his shooting-lodge of the bare barrack built high in the mountain wastes to put down the Wicklow Insurrection—the fondness with which he would point out the stone on which Holt and his brother insurgents sharpened their pikeheads—the romantic gusto with which he would relate how nearly his grandfather, Sir John Parnell, the last Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to be hanged for an adventurous plot to rush Dublin Castle by the raid of a disaffected regiment of Wicklow Horse (a project which, he always maintained, would have revolutionised the fortunes of the Insurrection of '98)—his fit of silent solemnity one night while we stood in the glen of the rivers, listening to their mystic whispers as they died away in the immensities of the

surrounding mountain ravines—all gave hints of poetic imaginings more authentic than a good many ballad-makers can manage to fit into their rhymes.

At least, he was a haughty and a dictatorial man? On the evidence of what witness who ever truly knew him? Not of any of his modest household at Avondale; they would have thought it too good luck to give their lives for him. Not of any of the thousands of village captains who saw him in habit as he lived in the midst of idolising mass meetings and at the excruciating "banquets" with which they generally wound up. In the most primitive country inn, regaled with cookery for which there was often little to plead except the good intentions of the cook, in an atmosphere of boisterous rustic enjoyment, he was not merely the courteous guest smiling away discomforts: he was as simple, as happy, and as much at home as his most unsophisticated neighbour at the table. He was not haughty even with the great. He moved among statesmen and nobles with an utter lack of self-consciousness which put them instantly at their ease, and an absolute incapacity to feel otherwise than at ease himself—placid, attentive, respectful to high or low. That he was not a sociable or a marrying man was perhaps a decree of Destiny, which applied as well to his beautiful sister, Fanny, the poet, and to Anna, who

might have been a scarcely less potent world-power than himself. The shadow of madness —too often, alas! one of the *atræ curæ* of human genius—hung heavily over one side of the house, if not over both. Also, Parnell's business in London was one of revolution and was not to be done—was, indeed, to be sorely undone—at dinner-tables and in ballrooms. It is worthy of remark that the *triste* idyll (the only one of a lonely life), which was to wreck him and to wreck much besides, had its origin in his declining a woman's invitation to her husband's dinner-table. He evaded the summons, and the lady had a lady's revenge. If she had known, the genial Prince of Wales's persistent efforts to wile the Irish Leader to a discreet dinner-party were no less resolutely evaded. But once entrapped into what is odiously called "a social function," the most modest or the most splendid, his simpleness was beyond all art, and his charm was irresistible. Mere moroseness had nothing to do with his "unsociability." His own social interests and tastes would have made him an ideal clubman—undemonstrative, but in a quiet way affable and *facile à vivre*. He was a batsman of considerable repute in the cricket world, a straight rider with the Wicklow hounds, a devout seeker after the grouse who was to be found on the mountains earlier than the sun on "the Twelfth," an athlete of the toughest thews and sinews for all his

seeming delicacy of build, the best man at handball and the best man at chess of more than a hundred " suspects " in Kilmainham Prison. If he renounced the world, he did it—to begin with, at all events—as truly for Ireland's sake as the monk renounces it for God's.

The silliest of all the ignorant legends that have gathered about Parnell's name is that of his scornful masterfulness in dealing with his own lieutenants. The mistake is one that might stand alone as a test of Englishmen's pathetic incapacity to understand Ireland. For nobody else could the legend survive a single evening spent with Parnell and " his young barbarians," either in a House of Commons " scrum," or at one of their Bohemian love-feasts in the days of their unconquered strength. Of his confidence Parnell was always chary; to his appreciation and admiration there were no bounds. There were only two of his colleagues—one of them little heard in public—whose advice he sought in emergencies of special difficulty and intimacy. They were selected as inner counsellors, I imagine, because their old relations with the Irish Republican Movement made them expert advisers in dealing with those secret forces which were Parnell's besetting anxiety, but whose honesty and unselfishness he always counted to be the main source of his strength. These occult confidences did not at all

prevent him from preserving with the remainder of his colleagues, to a greater degree than the leader of any other political party, relations of unaffected cordiality in this or that department of their special aptitudes.

Napoleon was a jealous critic of Moreau for his great victory at Hohenlinden. Jealousy was the last vice that could have jaundiced Parnell's appreciation of his Moreaus. If he for years bore the battle of Obstruction on his single shield, it was because he had then at his side nobody, except, in a narrower sphere of vision, faithful "Joe" Biggar, to practise the dangerous art, or even to understand its larger purpose. When the Healys and the Sextons began to coruscate around him, rivalling him in skilful handling of the rules of the House, and easily surpassing him in the flight of epigrams and bright javelins of the brain which dazzled the House even while tormenting them, Parnell was so far from envying them their battles of Hohenlinden, he was content—eventually too lazily content—to be a smiling spectator of their prowess and to minister to them their laurels with a lavish hand. Fiction was for him a pack of lies, as silly as the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* for grown men; the world was so full of more interesting truths and interesting men; yet he divined as surely as the most fervent believer in *The Waterdale*

Neighbours that Justin McCarthy was a great man in his books, as well as a most charming companion outside them, and he gloried in him accordingly. And so it was he forgathered with "Dick" Power, discussing his day with the Curraghmore hounds; or John Redmond and William Corbett, debating the prospects of the Aughavanagh "shoot"; or James O'Kelly, listening to the fairy tales of the Whitehead torpedo; or James Gilhooly, to whom he would expound a favourite project for turning the Castletownbere harbour to vast Admiralty uses (a project which the Admiralty have since had the good luck to realise in terms of cement forts and great guns).

Between him and one of his first and most useful confidants there arose a divorce, as to which there were grievous faults—or, rather, in truth, misunderstandings—on both sides. How little a part personal uncharity played in this misadventure an incident which occurred after the misunderstandings had begun to darken, but before they solidified into their settled shape, will perhaps sufficiently attest. When *United Ireland* had been only twelve weeks started, having no conceivable use for money beyond the classic oaten ration and its modest washing down, I dropped the half of my covenanted salary as Editor and Manager. The effect was to establish my Protean helper, Mr. Healy, my two sub-editors, and myself

upon a footing of democratic equality in the matter of pay. Parnell somehow heard of the folly. He did not attempt to reason with myself, but hearing what Mr. Healy's honorarium was, he insisted almost with indignation how monstrously inadequate a pittance it was in the case of a man of Healy's superb gifts. It was his first, and up to the time of "the Split," his last interference in the management of *United Ireland*, and he did not interfere in vain. Another and a still more practised journalist Parnell excluded ruthlessly from his esoteric circle, although in all matters other than party secrets he readily sunned himself in his genial company. "I tell —— as much as is good for him," he once said in reply to a remonstrance of mine. "A newspaper man would rather sell his immortal soul than keep a secret worth blabbing." When I gently reminded him that this was a rather sweeping censure of newspaper men, he laughed it off with the pretty bit of nonsense: "My dear O'Brien, you are not a newspaper man. You are Don Quixote."

Once in a way Parnell was capable of dropping sayings of a slightly acid taste in what he considered to be safe company. How many of the public men of England could survive, if on any one night the members' smoke-room of the House of Commons were, like the proverbial Palace of Truth, forced to yield up its secrets? The

sharpest thing I ever heard of a colleague was his too well published "—— is as vain as a peacock." The addendum "and has as little brain" was not in the least in his taste and was never spoken. The description of the same gentleman, so often attributed to him, "a melancholy humbug," was an editorial gibe in *The Freeman's Journal*, and was not at all of Parnell's manufacture. It may be taken as a decisive proof that no political leader was ever less uncharitable to his friends in his most intimate or his most exasperated moments, that a book in which his most secret thoughts and writings were pitilessly laid bare, and which would assuredly not have suppressed the bitterest allusions to the members of his Party, does at least this justice to his memory that it does not contain more than two or three ill-natured sentences concerning any of his dissentient colleagues, and even these not of a heinousness to be reproached to anybody except the angels. It was a more severe test than the average garden politician of any party could stand.

With Michael Davitt he was sometimes vexed, but always, as the American girl would put it, "sweet." Davitt used to relate with glee his story of the question to Parnell: "Suppose you had your Irish Parliament, how would you begin?" and the smiling reply: "Well, Davitt, I think I should begin by locking you up." Nobody

knew better than Davitt that, if locked up he were to be, it would be in an earthly Paradise compared with which even the Ballybrack cottage of his married life would be a place of punishment. To a similar question of my own as to what he would first do if an Irish Parliament were assembling, Parnell answered in his peculiar vein of merry irony: "Don't you think, O'Brien, that would be a capital opportunity to retire from Irish politics?" Quite otherwise I have heard him many a time broach his own bold programme of national Reconstruction for the first twenty years of an Irish Parliament, and he would add: "I daresay the boys would think me a dreadfully prosy person. By all means, the youngsters must have their try at the Millennium, but I should as soon propose to separate men's souls from their bodies as to feed the country upon a diet of poetry unmixed."

The blackest accusation in later years was Parnell's insolent ambition to fill Irish seats with his own creatures. The charge was never made when the Party was at its noonday height, for the good reason that the constituencies were then more indebted to the sort of men who consented to serve them than the members were to the constituencies who asked them to walk as on hot ploughshares for Ireland. The mean suggestion only came long after with Treasury salaries

and the messes of Treasury patronage which made a seat in Parliament a prize that sordid village ambition might intrigue for. The Party of the Parliament of 1882–5, and indeed, for some years after, was one for which Parnell had rather to beg for recruits than to force them on the constituencies. The despairing telegram from Kerry : " We'll elect a broomstick if you'll give it a name," gave the true key to the situation. To accept an Irish seat was to volunteer for a forlorn hope. There never was a leader who spread his nets wider or had fewer minions. Once when, at a Tipperary Convention, Mr. John O'Connor, who was recommended by Mr. Healy, as the spokesman of the Party, was rejected in the fury of a local war-dance, Parnell summoned a second Convention to reconsider the decision, but regarded the emergency with so much detachment that, for all the telegrams from Harrington and myself, urging him to preside, we searched the Kingstown and the North Wall boats in vain for any trace of his arrival. When we ran him down at last at Morrison's Hotel late on the night before the Convention, he inquired for the hours of the trains to Thurles the next morning, and when he learned there were two opted for the later one. When I remonstrated and urged that the local commotion was so intense I should have very much preferred he was already in Thurles when we were speaking, the man's

life was written in the smiling answer: "Good gracious, O'Brien, you *are* an extreme man!" He had little difficulty in getting the local hotheads to see that Mr. O'Connor would be the wiser nomination; but, so far as any personal preference of his own was concerned, Mr. John O'Connor "a yellow primrose was to him and nothing more." Some years later, upon a vacancy for Mid-Tipperary, a Convention for the choice of a candidate was summoned, but up to the eve of the Convention no candidate was to be found. I chanced upon Parnell in the Lobby of the House of Commons and pressed him to take action. He said he had written to the Archbishop of Cashel, who had no candidate to suggest, and he knew of no suitable man himself. What did I suggest? By a happy accident, Henry Harrison—a University stripling who had just been bearing a gallant part in the eviction struggles in Donegal and in the resulting prosecutions—caught my eye at the moment, as he was chatting over his experiences in a distant corner of the Lobby. Why not that fine young fellow, if no local man was offering? "Ah!" was Parnell's ready response: "Would you mind introducing me?" And before a week was over young Harrison was the member for Mid-Tipperary and a very high-hearted one at that. Such was the passion of this autocrat for garrisoning the Party with his own nominees. "The

Party" he regarded wholly from the point of view of its efficiency for the country's service, and by a rough and ready process of natural selection the fittest men somehow gravitated to its ranks. It was not until politics became a means of livelihood that the political boss and the "local man with a long-tailed family" found it worth while to capture the machinery of election and to bring Parnell's incomparable engine of parliamentary achievement to ruin.

The strangest of all the delusions about Parnell was one amazingly rife at the time of the "Split," that he was a greatly overrated leader, a *fainéant* who sucked the brains of his abler lieutenants. The present writer was much keelhauled at that crisis for suggesting that Parnell would be missed for many a calamitous year. From some passages of a letter to the Archbishop of Cashel from Boulogne (January 12, 1891) may be gleaned the kind of message I strove to convey to my countrymen when Parnell's opponents were plied with frenzied assurances that the struggle was already over and that the destruction of Parnell's leadership was a good riddance for Ireland.

It is the keelhaulers whom Time, after bitter experience, has keelhauled in their turn. The cry was that the brilliant "Party" would at long last come to its own when he was gone. "A bubble and a squeak, and all is over," was the cheerful

summary of the situation by the principal organ of the English Liberal Party, and the war-cry was noisily caught up in Ireland. Thirty years have gone and no doubt "all is over"—with the Parties, English and Irish, which compassed his destruction. *Mo náire!* all is not over, even yet, with the anarchy into which the disappearance of Alexander plunged his luckless generals and their country.

Men who did not penetrate beneath the surface of affairs were led by Parnell's absence from the struggle to rekindle the courage of his country after the depression of the collapse of the Land League and the Phœnix Park murders, to conclude that the "retirement into winter quarters" which he himself subsequently avowed had commenced already. This would be the shallowest of misjudgments. If his mouth was shut in Ireland during the long agony of the Spencer Coercion tragedy when public liberty was at the mercy of the newspaper-suppressors, the jury-packers, the official organisers of crime, the unspeakable scoundrels who really pulled the strings of Government—if he seemed to look on from afar at the uneven wrestle with the Goliaths of Dublin Castle, at the risky treasonous protests against the exploitation of the Prince's visit, at the Orange conspiracy to exclude Nationalism from Ulster by organised murder, or the still more unscrupulous scheme at Rome to

turn the very religion of the Irish people into an instrument of English rule—it was because Parnell's genius as a leader was not sentimental, but positive, in the French sense of the term. He coldly—and, without doubt, wisely—judged that he must not be caught going to jail again without some supremely good cause, and he knew that he could trust the necessary semi-civil war to the men who had the desperate business in hand. He calculated aright. His lieutenants no more thought of resenting his sparing himself for the future than modern corps commanders of reproaching a Marshal Foch with poring over maps in some back billet many a mile behind the firing line, instead of sharing the comparatively trivial risks of the trenches. In their most exultant hour they were as ready as the soldiers of Owen Roe O'Neill to cry, "Sure, we never won a battle—'twas Owen won them all!"

In recent days both those who call themselves constitutionalists and those who would not object to be described as "anti-constitutionalists" claim with equal persistency that they are following in the footsteps of Parnell. Both are equally astray in their claim. Parnell's policy was neither "constitutional" nor "unconstitutional," but a judicious combination of the two. The morality of an alliance with the Russia of the Penjdeh days, and of an alliance with English Whigs or Tories was equally indis-

putable in his eyes, as the one or the other was for the moment the best weapon at Ireland's hand. "Policy," "Party," or "methods"—"old" or new—were not ends in themselves, but varying and shifting conditions towards the one paramount end—which was the happiness of a free Ireland, and not merely of Ireland the poetical abstraction, but of the concrete men and women of Ireland as they live and move in a common country delimited by God's own hand. Whatever is best for Ireland at a given time—be it "moderate" or "extreme"—is best for her statesmen. That was his supreme moral and constitutional test, and although right or wrong did not change, methods did, as inevitably as did the generations of men or their weapons from the stone hatchets to the latest thing in big guns.

The men in glowing youth, for example, who persuade themselves they are but following where Parnell led, when they will hear of nothing short of encountering England in arms, would only have to know the man or to study his words and deeds to discover that they have only got hold of half the truth. His oft-quoted axiom that "no man can set bounds to the march of a nation" is one of the obvious truisms of all nations and of all times. He asserted, as he felt, Ireland's plenary rights as a nation, but implied no less surely "a march of the nation" from the actual to the ideal which

could be hastened or impeded as the existing generation exercised their understanding and descried their duty aright. He troubled himself not at all with any pretension of England to mark out boundaries to the evolution of the Irish nation; it was for him a question not of what Ireland "would," but what Ireland "could," in one generation's short day and according to her lights and her opportunities for the moment. Pedants' or poets' disputations on the subject did not concern him. In the Home Rule debates he cut short a pompous argument to prove that Ireland never had been a nation and never could be a nation, with the thrilling cry: "She *is* a nation!" The fact was not to be argued with. It proved itself. His business was to realise, not to prate, and for living men, not for a hazy perfectibility.

The seasoned politicians who set up the counterflag of a "constitutionalism" based wholly upon speeches and wirepulling in Westminster, and who have developed a sensitive shrinking from any "unconstitutional" procedure in Ireland, have much less excuse for claiming an apostolic succession to Parnell in their own feeble-witted programme. Only two of them knew Parnell in person, but the more important of the two began public life as a disciple of a physical-force man so uncompromising as John Mitchel, and put himself at the head of the semi-revolt of "the Kilmainham Party" in 1881 against

Parnell for even his very qualified dependence upon the Westminster Parliamentarianism, against which none but lunatics and Bolsheviks must now breathe an irreverent word. For constitutionalists of this new rite Parnell would have as scant respect as the Catholics of France had for the "constitutional Bishops" of the Revolution. Indeed, it may safely be affirmed that Mr. Dillon would have been hooted off any platform of the Land League had he in those days uttered the ultra-"constitutional" doctrines of his latter-day campaign against *Sinn Féin*.[1] The two master-keys to Parnell's success were Obstruction in Parliament and Boycotting in Ireland. Both were frankly "unconstitutional," both were violently abused at the start, and both have imposed themselves on the world—Parliamentary Obstruction as the unbloody weapon of every minority struggling to be

[1] The only claim I ever heard from a Land League platform to the "constitutional" character now hysterically arrogated to themselves by Parliamentarians of the later school was one which used to cause Parnell and ourselves a good deal of merry comment. The speaker was P. J. Sheridan, of Tobercurry, and his words were: "We'll give the landlords what they got from the French Revolution, and that is twelve feet of rope—*but always in a strictly constitutional manner*." He had a firm faith that, with this blessed qualification, any programme, no matter how bloodthirsty, was as "constitutional" as Blackstone. It was of Sheridan the remark was made by Pat Egan: "Sheridan would be quite happy to be hanged if he could read the report of the execution in the *Freeman* the next morning."

free, and Boycotting in substitution for armaments as the real sanction of President Wilson's League of Nations.

"How is a man to learn the rules of the House of Commons?" asked one of Parnell's recruits. "By breaking them," was the answer. No disguise was ever made of the foundational tenet of Irish agitation, that the only way of winning good laws was by breaking bad ones. I have talked these matters over with Parnell countless times, and he was always the same at the roots. To be "constitutional" the first postulate is a Constitution, and Ireland had none. We had, therefore, no moral obligation towards England except to hit her. With what weapon, was not a matter for England, but for ourselves, to settle. With Washington's weapons, if Ireland were a wide continent and England three thousand miles away, but, the facts being otherwise, with whatever less heroic weapons were at hand. On the other side of the account, he practised Obstruction not at all, as perhaps Biggar largely did, for the joyous impishness of the thing, but with a very far-drawn purpose. Nor did he countenance Boycotting without a keen disgust for its sordid side. They were the latest things in war inventions, and war inventions do not tend to become more nicely humane. He held by Butt's Federalism, and at the last by Grattan's Parliament, rather than by an Irish Republic. But

without believing any of the three to possess any heaven-bestowed sanctifying grace of its own, which should exclude either of the others in imaginable contingencies.

Politics was not an infallible revelation, nor even a science, but a high game of skill with a people's happiness for the stake. It was a matter partly of divination, and partly of guesswork—conditioned always by the axiom that principle must not be sacrificed to the expediency of the scheming politician. He regarded with contempt any pretension to set up this or that particular way of freeing Ireland as a divine dogma. In one age Irish patriotism took the form of fighting for a Stuart king, in another of Grattan's sublime conception of a commingling of the Protestant Colonists and the Catholic Gaels in a common nation. Then came the French Revolution, and Wolfe Tone and Emmet rightly strove to turn it to account (Emmet's plan, wild as it seemed, for going straight to the heart of English rule by beginning with an attack on Dublin Castle always won Parnell's homage). Then followed O'Connell's galvanism of the dead body of the nation—by dull processes of speech-making and blarney, no doubt, but still a wondrous performance, which first gave the power of organised agitation to the world; and then the flash of ideal splendour from Young Ireland and the magnificent quixotism of the Fenians. They all used

the weapons of their day, were they as feeble as bows and arrows or as sharp as pikeheads, and Parnell's sympathy embraced them all with a liberal catholicity of view.

And now his own turn came for a new experiment with a Party animated by a new discipline, wielding unsuspected powers in an alien Parliament, and leavened in Ireland by all that remained of Fenian self-sacrifice and aspiration. But Ireland must always be the Mecca. The vitality and health of the movement, the capital fund of deeds, if it must be coined into words in Westminster, must always be deposited in Ireland. The Party must only make descents upon England for warlike operations. But therein he discerned treasures and granaries beyond price to be spoiled. "There was an old king of yours—I can never get round the name," he once remarked, "who raided the Romans as far as the Alps, and it was only a chance stroke of lightning that killed him. This place" (the House of Commons) "is better than England's Alps; it is her Rome; this is where our boys can raid her Holy of Holies and get spoils worth some broken bones to take back."

Such were King Dathi and his men in their Alpine days.

The Irish Party was then in the morning freshness of its powers, its beliefs as firm as Sinai, and its illusions unprofaned. Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton were the most brilliant

figures in the parliamentary tournaments. People were incessantly contrasting them with one another, in the absurd Plutarch way, to their mutual embarrassment and ultimate estrangement. Totting up their rival "marks" was the more gratuitous that they were the complement of one another's powers, if the two orbs could only have been got to shine in the same debate, as happened with increasing rarity. Mr. Sexton was the expositor rather than the man of action. His phrasing was perfect. The sentences rolled out ready-minted from his brain as finished as newly struck gold coins. He was eminently in the jargon of the Lobbies "a Second Reading man"—large in his view of principles, slow-moving, and sometimes almost stately in language, as reliable as a blue-book in mastery of his facts; unluckily, he was not so much a master of figures as figures were the masters of him, and, with a temper apt to grow more and more peevish, there was a certain failure to come to the point for which even the splendid procession of his sonorous sentences could not make up. Quite otherwise, Mr. Healy must follow somebody—and the more formidable the better—to be at his best in debate. For the sublimer things of eloquence—for the elaborately stated general principle, the measured examination of some vast scheme of statesmanship in its full proportions—he professed a contempt greater than perhaps

he felt. He even dreaded to address a large audience, although the news that he was on his legs almost invariably collected them. It was often at some unexpected point in Committee that he would swoop down like a Captain of guerrillas from his mountains—in those days often ferocious enough to seem a redman with his tomahawk in the eyes of those who knew him not—but in more citizen times quite as apt to burst out in some unlooked-for fit of *bondiablerie* or pathos—dispensing now his sarcasms, now his compliments, here and there and everywhere as unaccountably as shooting stars, the terror of Ministers in charge of a Bill, the delight of everybody for the moment spared from his scalpel, but all the time holding fast to his point with a grip that never relaxed, and sometimes, when it was least looked for—perhaps upon some trumpery amendment in a half-sleepy Committee—flaming out into a blaze of patriotic emotion, half fury, half tears, which swept all before it with the impetuosity of an Irish clan rushing to the battle. In a House that heard Chatham and Burke and Gladstone, Healy's individuality will live with an originality little inferior to the most famous of those who went before him. His judgment was often doubted; his genius never.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor was another parliamentary wrestler of the first rank, whenever he could tear himself from those daring

newspaper enterprises of his own—always beginning with exiguous ways and means, and nearly always breeding capital and influence of startling amount—which were his principal occupation. He sacrificed his House of Commons reputation cheerfully in the common cause, speaking without a minute for preparation and from bottomless depths of ignorance. He would drop in while we were locked in conflict with Trevelyan upon some complicated Irish controversy, and leaning over from his bench would question Harrington or myself, who were supposed to be arsenals of the facts in Irish matters, for some inkling of what it was all about, and then as soon as the painstaking Chief Secretary sat down would spring up to club him with ready-made passion and with the assurance of one who had burnt the midnight oil in studying the facts in all their ramifications. John Redmond could seldom be induced to interfere in this rough-and-tumble war *par petits paquets*, but whenever he did so interfered with grace. His comparative uselessness where the blows were flying was partly due to the fact that the weapons wanted in such a warfare were not orations, but what were prosily called "a few words" (though hot ones), and may also, I think, be attributed partly to a diffidence which genuinely led him to the belief that his brother Willie was the greater orator of the two. Biggar, also, was still in the

prime of his riotous enjoyment of Obstruction. He knew not fear, and within that quaint Covenanting brain of his possessed incredible resources for the torture of the enemy; but he was himself the last person he desired to listen to, and so long as there was anybody else to play the toreador he looked on with utter self-effacement and clucked out his content with the benevolence of a matronly hen watching the performances of her chicks. Such men were, take them for all in all, a merry company in field or camp; they were long abominated by Englishmen, but neither they nor the race that produced them were ever despised.

Parnell towered amongst his marshals, an undisputed and beloved First Consul. But the most modest of potentates; a strong hand certainly, but a gentle and cordial one. Although it was by a happy chance, rather than by any deliberate choice of his own, his chief officers came together, his was the magnetism that held them together, and his the generous encouragement of initiatives that multiplied the activities at his command. The least noisy member of the orchestra himself, he was the Maestro without whose eye the fiddles and reeds would soon end in discords. He never by choice took the *beau rôle* of rising on advertised occasions to move sensational amendments before an expectant House. His most impressive speeches were made in some quiet

corner of a debate when his hearers were few, but were of those who counted. It took the House several years to understand the secret of why they listened to him at all. He never catered to their taste either for amusement or for a thrill. His thoughts were turned over a hundred times in his mind, before in some unexpected moment they escaped his lips; but for the words he had no care and no preparation. I never saw him use a written note. All was without colour or pretension. He seldom used an adjective, and seldomer still a superlative. The general body of his discourse was as passionless as readings from the Liturgy, yet without a trace of preconcerted solemnity. Only there was ever in the midst of the sober self-restraint some flash of burning passion which lighted up all the rest as the lightning does a starless night. Some phrase, commonplace enough in form, but with a soul of fire in it, like his celebrated trumpet-note to the famine-stricken Western peasants: "Keep a firm grip of your homesteads!"—was of the kind that makes history, in Parliament and in nations, after the most iridescent fireworks of parliamentary repartee have lost their glow even in the next morning's newspapers.

Parnell had no fads, and scarcely any preferences, as to methods. So long as the old mad Rules or rulelessness made it still possible for Joe Biggar to turn the Prince

of Wales out of his seat over the clock to entertain some Irish lady friends of his, Parnell devoted himself to the Plutonic mysteries of Obstruction with the fanaticism of a man of one idea. But no sooner was that diamond mine worked out, and Joe Biggar forced to look for other entertainment, his great master or (as some thought at the time) pupil in Obstruction turned with no less complacency to the utilisation of the stupendous popular forces precipitated, as the chemists say, by the Land League of Devoy and Davitt. When the Land League's sentence of death came, he turned to the No-Rent Manifesto. When that in turn had run its day, he calmly addressed himself to negotiations with his jailers, and by his Kilmainham Treaty emerged with the most amazing paper of concessions ever wrung from an Imperial Government by its prisoner—concessions which, but for the tragedy in the Phœnix Park, must have blossomed into Home Rule a generation ago. Those who found in the Kilmainham Treaty a capitulation rather than a triumph would have repented in sackcloth and ashes had they only been aware of the state of facts in which Parnell had to work his miracle. When the Phœnix Park tragedy hurled him from the heights, Sisyphus set himself doggedly, although with a heavy heart, to roll up the stone again from the bottom. The field of active conflict with

the law in Ireland, he had the candour to own, was closed to him, as had been the field of conflict with the rules of Parliament. He satisfied himself that the work of prolonging in Ireland the deathless war with the oppressor—for the moment the most urgent, indeed the indispensable—might safely be left to younger or more fire-eyed enthusiasts. He himself soared placidly away to his eyrie on the cedar-top at Westminster to await his luck, and it soon came in the Household Suffrage Bill of 1884, which had only to be extended to the "mud cabin vote" in Ireland, as he speedily made sure it must, to revolutionise the situation from top to bottom and deprive England of any pretence of an alternative between governing Ireland as a Crown Colony or yielding to the all but unanimous claim of her representatives. Opportunism all, the purists who refuse to let their foot rest on this too, too solid earth will say; but the opportunism not of the knavish politician, but of the patriot of genius who seizes the propitious hour for an advance for his disarmed nation, making quite sure it is an advance in the direction of further advances, whenever the next propitious moment arrives. The old Gaelic proverb—"If you are weak, it is no harm to be cunning"—is of the essence of wisdom for a nation that cannot choose its weapons, and Parnell never offered any excuses for practising it.

He never broke off what we would now call wireless communication with the front in Ireland. He wrote a sage public letter on the occasion of the Prince's visit, and another when the Orange fire-eaters undertook to keep the Household Suffrage Act out of Ulster with their revolvers. It was a striking instance of his loyalty as a leader that he publicly championed *United Ireland* in the House of Commons, at a moment when its fortunes might well have seemed desperate, and when, as we now know, he must have felt uneasy twitches lest the denunciations of Dublin Castle might have their repercussion. His only appearance in person in Ireland was a singular one. In his speech at the Dublin Banquet, where he was presented with the National Tribute of £40,000, what smaller souls regarded almost as an insult characteristic of the man was the odd circumstance that Parnell forgot to make any reference, direct or even remote, to the cheque for £40,000 he had just been handed. Critics who looked deeper might find a nobler significance in the fact that the subject had been jostled out of his mind by his absorption in the superior exigencies of a speech intended to brace the country up for a long ordeal of suffering to be tranquilly borne in his absence, and, to his far-seeing gaze, to be magnificently rewarded.

That reward had now come in Sir Henry James's Household Suffrage Act, and he

bent all his parliamentary skill and energy to defeating any attempt to exclude Ireland from the totality of its enfranchisement. Thenceforth he lay in wait with the patience of an Indian chief on the warpath for the fall of the Government, and with it the end of the suppression of public liberty by a Crimes Act which was itself the worst of crimes, to be followed by a General Election and the establishment of Home Rule as an impregnable constitutional demand. The fall, by a usual experience in the House of Commons, came when next to nobody except Parnell himself expected it. The division was upon an increased Whisky and Beer Duty. Some of our unfortunate colleagues who had been routed out of their beds in Ireland by imperative telegrams from Parnell found it hard to stifle their temptation to strong language when they arrived in a House in a state of boredom bordering upon coma. Even while members were passing through the voting lobbies, it was with the torpid air of men who had been passing through dozens of similar divisions ending in flatulence and futility. It was not until it began to be seen that the Tories and the Irishmen were still coming through the turnstiles, after the Ministerial lobby was exhausted, that the first signs of incredulity changed to a hush of awe, and then the House, which a few minutes before was a collection of bores and bored, became a mass

of screaming, gesticulating, raving lunatics, as the Clerk at the Table placed the winning numbers in the hands of the Opposition tellers. Lord Randolph Churchill, who sat in front of us at the corner below the gangway as usual, with the faithful Balfour, Wolff, and Gorst, sprang on the green bench and from that elevation waved his silk hat around his head with the yells of a wild animal fastening his teeth upon his prey. If he had turned around to kiss us, or had stood upon his head on the floor, his Irish allies would scarcely have found the demonstration an extravagant one. For, if to this ambitious English youngster it was the cry of "Checkmate!" in a royal game for the mastery of an Empire, it was for us the end of an all but insufferable agony, the reward of three years of vigils, risks, and seemingly hopeless resistances without a break—it was the downfall of our torturers, the bliss of a first entry into heaven for our nation.

Parnell's way of enjoying the victory, as contrasted with Churchill's, is worth recording. In an interview he gave me the next morning for *United Ireland*, there was no jumping on benches or hat-waving, but in reply to the question, "What advantage do you hope to reap from last night's vote?" this sober answer:

"Well, in the first place, the pleasure and advantage of that vote to us is increased by the fact that we have saved almost the only

remaining Irish industry from a permanent burden of £500,000 a year."

It was not, we may be sure, that the Irish leader was more stupid than the rest of the world who were all agog that morning at the fall of a great Ministry, the dismissal of Spencer, the death-blow of Coercion, the opening up of epoch-making possibilities for Irish Nationality. It was that, in the first place, it was not in his way to boast, and that, in the next place, he was possessed of a financial realism—an almost humorous passion for a small saving—which would have made him an incomparable Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer. The National Tribute was repaid fourteen times over at a stroke, and was to be repaid again every succeeding year, and this was but the *hors-d'œuvre* of a Gargantuan feast of victory for his people.

CHAPTER V

PARNELL AS CONQUEROR

We have now arrived at a stage at which Parnell's strategy of playing off one English party against another can be luminously seen at work. It was "vigour beyond the law" in Ireland—sheer lawlessness, if you will—that overthrew Spencer, as it overthrew Forster before him; but it was at Westminster Parnell now proceeded to turn his raw material from Ireland to account for a more permanent purpose. Chamberlain, who had been himself the Friar Joseph, "the grey cardinal" of the Kilmainham Treaty, had some spiteful things to say of "The Maamtrasna Alliance" which brought the Tories into office—"The Maamtrasna Alliance" being that under which conscientious Tory lawyers like Sir Edward Clarke, and not quite so conscientious Tory politicians like Lord Randolph Churchill and his Fourth Party, collaborated with us in inveighing against the denial of justice even to friendless Connacht peasants—and also, no doubt, incidentally in "dishing the Whigs." Such recriminations might carry their reproach for

English Party politicians, but could only make the Irish leader smile, if he were not too polite to betray any sign of his satisfaction. For equal and impartial independence as between both English Parties—a cold-blooded readiness to co-operate with or to chastise either the one or the other according to their deserts for the moment—was the master-key of his policy, as the abandonment of that impartiality was in after-years to prove the death-warrant of the great Party which owed its creation to him.

This intellectual indifference as between Whigs and Tories has always been one of the puzzles of Irish psychology for Englishmen, and as often as not has been attributed to something inconsequent, or even treacherous, in the Irish nature! The good Liberal is conscious to himself of the desire to do for Irishmen (by degrees) everything that can possibly be good for them, and knows not why we should vex the soul of his dear Mr. Gladstone by concerting pranks with an urchin like Randolph to baffle his good intentions. The Tory finds the Irishman delightful in the Army, in the clubs, and in the hunting-field, and cannot imagine what he can find in common with those Puritan Radicals. They have never hit upon the simple explanation that the Irishman is not born either a little Radical or a little Tory—nay, has a good deal in common with both, and no absolute incompatibility with either

—but is, in any case, by a decree of nature, a being as different in furniture of mind and soul and aspiration as a Frenchman is from an Englishman. I have known English Liberals who would stop at nothing short of dying for Ireland—even if at that—for whom the best of Irishmen coming out of a Tory Division Lobby had something of the air of a monster. It was when this feeling, whether through good fellowship, or less avowable motives, gained Irish representatives themselves that the decay of Irish Parliamentarianism began.

It will be seen that, as soon as a substantial accommodation with England became practical politics, Parnell accepted the consequences loyally both in his own conduct and in the orientation of the movement. So long as Ireland had no such guarantee, he acknowledged no constitutional limitations, except those of prudence, in his dealings with the two sets of slippery English politicians who, in their greed for office, were ready either to fawn upon him or rend him as it might best serve their purpose. There is no longer any reason for withholding one piece of evidence how little the pedantries of technical allegiance to England were suffered to stand in the way whenever appeals addressed in vain to her sense of justice were likely to be more successful if addressed to her necessities.

In the early part of 1885, while the reign

of repression in Ireland seemed still unshaken, and when the Russian menace to Afghanistan led to preparations for a vast war on the Indian frontier if the Russian advance to Penjdeh were persisted in, Parnell did not hesitate to engage his personal responsibility deeply in an attempt to turn the crisis to account for Ireland. James O'Kelly, who had explored the most intricate subterranean ways of Fenianism in America, and whose romantic relations with the *New York Herald* had given him an astonishingly widespread influence with American politicians, was despatched to the United States to investigate the possibilities of an armed descent upon Ireland in concert with the Russian war plans. The idea was the swift enrolment of five thousand Irish-American veterans of the Civil War, and their sudden concentration upon an American port, where ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet were to await them for embarkation with a cargo of rifles and light guns. O'Kelly subsequently gave me to understand that no less a personage than General Phil Sheridan, the hero of the Shenandoah Valley, had intimated his willingness to take charge of the expedition, and it was known that a high authority in Washington would take care that there was no indiscreet interference with the departure of the Russian squadron, whose Government were at the time the curled darlings of the American public.

To the present writer was confided the task of communicating on behalf of the Irish leader with the secret agent of the Czar, then on a mission to London. In a frowsy back drawing-room in Ebury Street, dim enough for a conspirator's cave, I had the honour of a lengthy conversation with the Russian Envoy, who had long been the most distinguished figure in Russia's mysterious operations on the Afghan frontier, and who, so far as the heavy blinds and curtains enabled me to see my interlocutor at all, might have been a minor Professor, discussing some curious theory of Greek verse. But his views, once formed, were expressed with rapidity and quite nettly.

From the Russian point of view there was nothing to object. The ships and the arms could be made available without much difficulty. He anticipated no serious hindrance from the United States' authorities. The raid would serve Russia's purpose well enough (although, he added softly, Russia was never in a hurry), and might be the means of stirring up a blaze in India, while the Afghan frontier was being fought over. Whether it would be equally good business for Ireland, he observed with a smile, and, as it struck me, in a tone of unexpected good nature, it was not for him to pronounce. "A raid that could only be a raid is a serious matter for a country so close to England; but I presume your friend has thought of

all that, or you wouldn't be here." The sum was, he would find no difficulty in recommending the project to his people, but it could only be on condition of Parnell giving him some guarantee—he suggested his signet-ring—that the design was a serious one, and would be resolutely pursued. Parnell, as it happened, possessed a family signet-ring among the numerous precious stones he was wont at that time to wear on his fingers. His comment on the proposal was characteristic: "None of our family ever had luck that lost a ring," he observed, quite gravely. "Besides, I am advised —— has no rights of extra-territoriality, and in case of war will never be allowed to leave England. He may escape hanging, but you and I won't. No, he will have to think of something better than my signet-ring, if he is going to best England."

Before I could repeat my visit to Ebury Street, Komaroff's troops were withdrawn from Penjdeh, there was an end of a war which probably Russia never had any notion of allowing to be precipitated, and with it there was an end of our castles in the air. The incident is only worth recalling as an illustration—of which the secret archives of the first Boer War will supply a companion picture still more realistic—of that mixture of daring in extremities, with no less daring moderation in hours of victory, which was the essence of Parnell's character

as a leader. And be not at all too contemptuous of the military inadequacy of the Irish-American expedition. It could not have sufficed to overrun Ireland, but it was Parnell's calculation that, taken in connection with gigantic dangers on the Indian frontier, a descent on Ireland by dashing Phil Sheridan must quite surely startle Gladstone into some epoch-making proffer of Irish freedom, and few who knew Gladstone and knew Parnell could have much doubt that on such a *dies iræ* the bargain would have been adventured and would have been perfected. But to return from this interlude of the outlaw side of Parnell's strategy.

The two heaviest calamities that befell the Irish cause in our time—"the Split" of 1890 and the sacrifice of the unprecedented opportunity of an Irish settlement by consent in 1903—arose, the first of them, from a tenderness for English Liberalism, approaching to a vice, and the second from a wholly vicious incapacity to collaborate with English Toryism in doing the work of Ireland. Parnell was weakened by no such foible of love or hate in his dealings with Englishmen. Within twelve months, an Irish leader who durst not raise his voice in Ireland a few months previously had the leaders of both English Parties flattering him with more or less shy approaches to Home Rule, and he encouraged the advances of both of them with consummate skill and without treachery

to either, and of the successful competitor constituted a world-apostle of Irish independence. Be it always borne in mind that he had only a couple of dozen even of the Irish members at his back (the rest being palsied place-hunters of the "nominal Home Ruler" type), that the actual balance of power as between English Parties, save by some chance almost as long to be waited for as the blossom of a century plant, hardly entered into his dreams, and no individual worth counting on either Front Bench could yet be got to whisper "Home Rule" except in guilty secrecy. What might have been his achievements, if, like his successors in the "Home Rule Parliament" which finally wrecked Home Rule, he could command the Division Lobbies and make and unmake Prime Ministers as the interests of Ireland dictated—if in addition to all that he had the entire Liberal Party, and far the greater portion of the Tory Party, hungering for a great historic agreement with Ireland!

The Spencer regime was scarcely a fortnight fallen when we had Chamberlain proposing his tour in Ireland with Sir Charles Dilke under our auspices to promulgate the proposal of an expansible "National Council," touching which "I would not hesitate to transfer the consideration and solution of the Education Question and the Land Question entirely to an Irish Board altogether independent of English Govern-

ment influence, which would, of course, be also invested with powers of taxation in Ireland for those strictly Irish purposes." And we had the new Tory Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Carnarvon, making (and meaning) a speech in the House of Lords foreshadowing something very much more majestic in the shape of Irish liberty. The repulse of Chamberlain's essay to enthrone himself as our National Patron Saint had, perhaps, its drawbacks; but in the state of irritability then prevailing between the Liberal leaders, it was for us perforce a choice between Gladstone and Chamberlain, and it is easy enough now to understand that, had we elected differently, Ireland must have shambled along obscurely in the train of a Radical Jack Cade, and the Gladstonian Home Rule epos might never have been written. For any damage suffered from Chamberlain's ill-humour we were, at all events, consoled by a speech a week or two later in Leeds by Mr. Herbert Gladstone. The speaker dismissed with contempt the taunt of the party wirepullers that the Irish had sold themselves to the Tories. He recognised Parnell's right and duty to extract the best terms he could for his own country from any and every combination with English parties.

"He told the Tories it was no good half trusting the Irish people. The proper policy was to throw to the wind all coercive legisla-

tion and prove their trust in the Irish people by allowing them to manage their own affairs. . . . His point was that for good or ill Mr. Parnell represented the Irish people, and the Tories must settle with him a system of government based entirely upon the people's wishes."

The Leeds speech attracted little notice in England, but, coming from Gladstone's favourite son, was rightly divined by Parnell and his inner counsellors as a first Pythian suggestion that the late Liberal Prime Minister was preparing to soar into heights of Home Rule legislation far above the reach of Chamberlain's municipal imagination, or of the Tory young men's devices to steady the trembling knees of the new Government. Parnell noted the flight of the dove from Hawarden, as of the dove from Birmingham, with interest, but in silence. He was the last to be melted out of his adamantine strength in negotiation the moment Englishmen spoke him fair. He had, besides, a rooted conviction that, so long as the House of Lords survived, it was a Tory Government alone that could bring a Home Rule Bill to fruition. The danger for Ireland was not that the Tory Government could upon any plausible hypothesis come back impregnable, but that the General Election might return a Liberal majority sufficiently sweeping to condemn Ireland for the duration of another Parlia-

ment to a renewal of her sickening experiences of the theories of Liberal self-righteousness and the realities of Liberal coercive rule.

Parnell threw for the greatest stake of his life—a semi-attractive, semi-compulsive agglomeration of the two Imperial parties to effect an Irish settlement. The pace was not to be forced with the Tory country gentlemen. Their first timid relations with their Irish supporters were those of prim maiden ladies with wild young men. But before the Tories were seated in power at all, Randolph Churchill had pinned them to the abandonment of coercion in Ireland, and had, in full view of the House of Commons, kicked Sir Stafford Northcote into the Upper House; and it was a secret of Policinello that as sound a kicking was in store for whoever else should air any antique objections to "the Maamtrasna Alliance." Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the leader of the House of Commons, if he was less daring, was known to be little less adaptable. The astuter politicians chose for their intermediary with Parnell, in the new Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Carnarvon, a man of much elevation of principle, whose gentleness of temper and breadth of sympathy, if it exposed him to the slings and arrows of more double-dealing colleagues, gave him the distinction of

being the first Tory statesman to rise to the conception of a frank recognition of Irish Nationality in its plenitude as the highest glory of Tory policy and a sure bulwark of the Empire in the one vital spot where it was vulnerable. The famous meetings between the new Viceroy and the Irish leader in an unoccupied house in the West End may imply their own rebuke for the clandestine Tory diplomacy which was infantile enough or roguish enough to resort to them, but, by the assured verdict of time, will live to the honour of the two men who took part in them. There was no substantial difference between Lord Carnarvon's and Parnell's reports of the interviews between them. They were agreed that no formal bargain had been made, but Lord Carnarvon never disputed Parnell's own conclusion that they parted "in complete accord regarding the main outlines of a settlement conferring upon Ireland a Parliament in name and in fact." Still more significantly the interview was sought by the new Viceroy with the full knowledge of Lord Salisbury, and the particulars of their conversation were communicated by him to the Prime Minister a day or two afterwards without a word of disapproval by the latter. So little scandalised were Lord Carnarvon's craftier colleagues in the Ministry that several months afterwards they despatched to his assistance

in Dublin Colonel Howard Vincent, M.P., but lately the head of the Metropolitan Police, to continue the conversations in the minutest details with Harrington at the headquarters of the National League, and with myself in that tabernacle of treasons, the editorial room of *United Ireland*, and by this time the high designs imparted to Parnell by the Viceroy were evolving into a marked preference for "the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland" plan of Grattan's Parliament, with certain modern adjustments as contrasted with the prosier system of Federal subordination proposed by Butt. Finally, after these kites had been flying for several months between the Irish Government and the Nationalist leaders, Parnell brought matters to an issue in a speech in which he suggested the Dual Monarchy arrangements of Austria-Hungary as offering the best available model for the future relations of the two islands. Lord Salisbury himself responded to the challenge in his famous speech at Newport in October 1885 in which, while he professed "not to have seen any plan which gave him *at present*" any ground for anticipating a solution "in that direction," the Tory Prime Minister unmistakably left an open door for the Grattan Parliament arrangement foreshadowed by his Viceroy and his envoy, and expressed his own very decided conviction that the loyalist

minority would find a truer protection under a broad National Legislature than under any paltry scheme of County Government.

It was as far as a Conservative Party, weak in the country and torn with the internal wars of "the old gang" and the new, could be expected to go—further indeed than Gladstone had yet gone or was ever to go—and Parnell flung the full weight of his sword into the Tory battle at the polls. He issued an address to the Irish of Great Britain, pressing upon them the immeasurable advantages that must accrue to the Irish Cause from a united vote for the Tories. Had his exhortation been generally obeyed, a Tory majority, however narrow, must have been ensured by the turning over of dozens of the great manufacturing towns in the North of England and the Clyde Valley. A Tory majority once elected—all the more desirable by reason of its modesty—with an Irish Party trebled in strength to support (and watch) them, a complaisant House of Lords, and a Liberal Party constrained by every obligation of honour and decency to second a great Irish policy of appeasement, might have been in a position —God knoweth!—to turn into the joyous resurrection of a nation a quarter of a century which was to be spent in exasperating the quarrel with new legacies of duplicity on the one side and on the other a too

ready trust in English promises for ever betrayed.

It was not to be. Michael Davitt, who had already publicly dissented from the policy of refusing Chamberlain a national welcome to Ireland, now traversed the hustings of Great Britain to cry out against the imagined sale of the Irish vote to the Tories. Rejecting every entreaty to enter parliament himself, his fanatical devotion to the interests of the British Democracy led him to run counter to the plans of his own country's representatives to turn the parliamentary situation to the best profit for Ireland. His wayward genius had an easy success with the inflammable population of the Clyde and the Scottish mining regions which have since given to British Socialism the crack regiments of its Church Militant. The Irishmen of Manchester stood as true as in the Manchester Martyrs' day, but those of other great industrial towns of the North of England, which were once the strong right arm of Fenianism, had either taken Labour for their political god, or were already dominated by the Radical tradition which had come down from O'Connell's Lichfield House Compact with the Whigs, and during the subsequent years of close association with Radical local politics under the tutelage of Mr. T. P. O'Connor had little left except an Irish accent to

distinguish them from the official English party organisation.

Parnell's bold cast to build a million Irish voters in Britain into a gigantic machine of war to be thrown on this side or on that, with a supreme disregard for merely English party interests, met with a comparative defeat. The Tory Government came back with little more to choose than how they were to die. Nobody more freely than Parnell accepted the fortunes of war. Having fallen short on his own side of the bargain, he was not scandalised at all that the beaten Tories should make no more Newport speeches and should select a new Irish Coercion Bill on which to fall. Political profligacy, however, has bounds which are not to be passed without becoming a crime. Lord Randolph Churchill telling Justin McCarthy, when the electoral results were known: "I did my best for you, and now I'll have to do my best against you," and setting forth with the war-song of "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right," to plunge his firebrand into the gunpowder of an Orange bigotry and ignorance he in his soul detested —and all because twenty or thirty English constituencies had failed to come up to the calculations of the wire-pullers—makes a sufficiently revolting picture in the eye of honest history; but even the apology of youth and levity could not be pleaded for a more pretentious transgressor when Lord

Salisbury, who had dangled Hungarian Independence before Ireland's eyes when the Irish vote was still to be sought, repaired his political misfortunes by undertaking by means of twenty years of ruthless coercion to exterminate his ex-Irish allies as a nation of Hottentots. On the eve of the General Election of 1885 all the considerable men of both parties, Liberal and Tory, had declared for Home Rule, if politicians' dealings with the most sacred concerns of nations are not to be accounted as false as dicers' oaths. A generation of men have since lived and died, and Ireland's trustfulness has been foully betrayed by all English Ministries and parties in turn—by the Chamberlain of his post-Radical days who turned his proposed tour to Ireland as our National Apostle into a felonious raid on Belfast as an organiser of civil war, as well as by the Salisburys and Churchills whose electoral gamble of 1885 miscarried, and—perhaps most inexcusably of all—by the imbecility—let us yet not say perfidy—of an irresistible Home Rule Ministry of 1911 installed specially in power to complete Gladstone's work, and to the hour of its inglorious death effecting nothing but the transmutation of Ireland's hopes to ashes.

Prate of the wild unreason of Easter Week insurrections!—to the new generation whose hot eyes peruse the story, the unending trickery, insincerity, incompetence, or down-

right treachery of English politicians of all parties in bedevilling a national claim of which their chief men were agreed a quarter of a century ago in recognising the justice, might well inspire a more ineradicable hatred of the English name than the worst Elizabethan and Cromwellian atrocities which were the deeds of brutal, but at least of barbarously ignorant, Englishmen. Those of us who have fretted thankless years out in the search for peace with England will find any reproof of the impatience of our young countrymen with "Parliamentarianism" perish on our lips.

One Abdiel of shining fidelity survived among the faithless. Lord Carnarvon left Ireland as he had entered it, a stainless gentleman, and like the Liberal Lord-Lieutenant who preceded him, an unfaltering Home Ruler for all his days. It is curious to observe that the Prime Minister who disowned Lord Carnarvon's offers to the Irish leader, but shabbily postponed the disclaimer until his own "Dual Monarchy" bid for the Irish vote had been snowed under by the electorate, was the same Lord Salisbury who, twenty years later, disowned another great Tory scheme of conciliation in Ireland, and allowed its author, George Wyndham, to devote himself to political self-slaughter rather than quote the secret code message from his unscrupulous chief which would have been his

justification. It may well be one of history's revenges to remember the work of Carnarvon and Wyndham in Ireland to the high honour of the Tory Party when Salisbury's own record of gilded insignificance is forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARNELL OF THE HOME RULE BILL

THE moment for action was no sooner come than Parnell struck hard and home. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule, and the Tories' return to coercion were soon the talk of the world. The new Chief Secretary (Mr. W. H. Smith) returned from Dublin on January 26, 1886, with the draft of his Coercion Bill in his pocket. Before he arrived in London the Tory Coercionists had been expelled from office by a majority of seventy-nine, and the greatest Englishman of his century had pledged his life to take up the noble burden of which the Tories *per viltate* (and also perhaps by ill-chance) had made the "grand refusal." Parnell's strategy was only baffled in one conquest to make a greater one. It was on a raw February night during the recess he made the announcement to four or five of us in his sitting-room at Morrison's Hotel, in Dublin. With his characteristic indifference to personal discomfort, he had neglected to order a fire, and his mutton cutlet was growing cold and his pint of Rhine wine unopened, while he

doggedly made his way through bundle after bundle of letters awaiting his arrival. All of a sudden the very room lighted up for some of us like a bit of heaven when, raising his head from some dull document, concerning God knows what, in which he had been absorbed, he remarked casually and without emphasis: "We are going to have a Home Rule Bill. Will you, gentlemen, kindly turn it over and let me have your suggestions as to what we want—I mean, what we can get?" The youth of a more fortunate time will never understand the glow of incredulous rapture the words sent through every fibre of one like myself who had entered upon the *Via Dolorosa* of the Nationalist struggle with an all but fatalist persuasion that it was bound to end in failure, desperation, penal servitude, or the gallows. There were bright and sustaining dreams enough to illumine the way, but at the back of all there was a perfectly resigned knowledge that one must look for Ireland's deliverance, as for the solution of all the rest of this world's mysteries and unhappinesses, to powers and regions immeasurably beyond the reaches of our little lives. And now to be told that heaven was about to descend upon earth, and within this very session of Parliament, and to be told so by a man whose sober words carried conviction as complete as the first authentic bunch of grapes from the Promised Land

brought to the Jewish wanderers hungering and thirsting in a wilderness of despair!

The battle was now transferred to the new Cabinet. Towards the latter end of March Parnell summoned me to London by an urgent telegram, and for the next two weeks we were in almost daily communication, and for vast spaces of the day and night. Sometimes we were entering the underground regions of the House of Commons under the arcade at an hour of the morning that, in the not remote days of the dynamite terror, might well have given the policemen pause, and there were various sittings (not of a very festive character) extending beyond midnight in the supper-room of a restaurant in the Strand. Parnell was troubled about the Bill, and still more about the Gladstone and Chamberlain wrestlings in the Cabinet. He was most vexed of all (for, he said, "if our grip goes, all goes") by the persistent circulation in London by the Labouchere busybodies, not, as he suspected, without certain Irish privities, of injurious whispers that the Prime Minister was complaining that he was pressing for interviews with the Irish leader and could not discover him. "Why," he said, "if anybody has anything to complain of, it is I. I have time and again pressed that we should be better able to get to business by personal contact, and the old gentleman dodges the suggestion. Upon

my word, I think he is afraid of me!" he added with the incredulous glee of a schoolboy who should find the master on his rostrum cowering before him.

In matter of fact, he was at the time in close and constant association with the new Chief Secretary, Mr. Morley, for whom both men believed the question of Ireland to be the main interest of life, and who might always be relied upon to negotiate the exchange of views without the fear of controversial jolts or jars. Of Mr. Morley personally Parnell always spoke with respect, although occasionally with some betrayal of the poor opinion of the man of science for the man of letters: "There is one part of this Bill Morley thoroughly understands—our ceasing to come to Westminster. He is quite sound upon that. He wants above all else to be rid of us. I really don't wonder," he would genially add. "They don't understand us a bit to this hour, and they never will." But observations like these were only the rare distractions of a time of intense application to the business of the Bill. Upon the mere ornamental architecture of a Constitution he scarcely wasted a thought. What were to be the qualifications of the First and Second Orders, whether the First Order was to be elected or nominated, whether they were to sit together or in separate chambers, whether he was to be Assemblyman Parnell or member

of an Irish House of Commons, whether this or that power was expressly to be given or withheld, whether even it was to be done by a list of permitted subjects or by a list of excluded subjects, troubled him not at all. "All that is poetry, but it gives no end of material for concessions, if we are to gain the big things."

From the start he fastened upon Customs and Excise as the touchstone by which the Irish experiment must thrive or perish. "An Irish Customhouse is really of more importance to Ireland than an Irish Parliament," he once exclaimed with emphasis. He meant, of course, that an Irish Parliament, stripped of its own natural revenues, was bound to prove a curse both to those who created it and to those who might strive to work it. He had got a fixed belief that Gladstone knew from the outset that full fiscal autonomy was a necessity of life for the success of Home Rule, and proposed to concede it in his original draft, and only finally sacrificed it in the Cabinet to satiate the insatiable. This impression, I think, he derived from Mr. Hugh Childers, Gladstone's Chancellor of the Exchequer, who undoubtedly favoured the frank concession of Customs and Excise himself, and who throughout the Home Rule struggle proved himself a faster friend of Ireland than any Englishman, except one, who basked in the limelight. Strong, if not quite outspoken,

confirmation is to be found in Lord Morley's *Life*, beginning with a letter of Gladstone six months before (V. III, p. 235), in which he says: "I would not put my foot down as to revenue, but would keep plenty of elbow-room to keep all customs and excise, which would probably be found necessary"—a sufficiently supple proposition to begin with for the hardest of Imperial financiers. Parnell reported with increasing restiveness the losing fortunes of Irish finance in the distracted counsels of the Cabinet. He was not sure that Mr. Morley altogether grasped the financial problem in its earth-to-earth details, and finally insisted upon a personal interview with the Prime Minister. A couple of nights before the introduction of the Bill, as I sat in the "silence" room of the Library, finishing an article for *United Ireland*, Parnell put in his head from the corridor, where the cry of "Who goes home?" was echoing, and beckoned me out. Having seen the last of the loiterers out of the strangers' smoke-room downstairs, he sat me down in his usual corner, to the despair of the attendant and the policeman, who knew it was the preliminary to a prolonged sitting but bore it with an outward sweetness which I always thought was an exquisite personal tribute to Parnell. He had just had his interview with the Prime Minister, and was very grave. "I never saw him closely before. He is such an old, old man!

His face is a bunch of wrinkles. He had the wide-open eyes of a fine animal in a fright. Once, when he yawned, I really thought he was dying, but he flared up again. He will never live to see this thing through." Asked how the Bill stood, his reply was: "Badly, and going to be worse." Harcourt, who had stood staunch on all else, was threatening to resign if the Irish Legislature was allowed to touch Customs. Without Customs, what was there left except the power of speech-making? He had told Gladstone, as gently as he could, that he would have to throw the Bill out as it stood the next day. "I do not want to add to your worries, Mr. Gladstone," he said, "but please recollect you have no better guarantee for our good faith than that we tell you plainly it won't do. If we did not want a settlement we would grasp at your Bill, bad finances and all, and make your Irish Legislature an official headquarters for disaffection."

Gladstone's Budget depended upon the hope of savings in Irish government which were monstrously exaggerated. "No doubt, the present incumbents in Irish offices are so bad a lot that there would not be a murmur of discontent in our own camp if we disbanded them in regiments, but you would have to absorb half the savings in pensioning your people off, and, if our own men contracted a taste for the good things in the Government offices and the Four Courts, where should

we be then?" To a fixed Imperial contribution he made no objection; he made no objection if Irish representation at Westminster was to cease. Gladstone was apparently under the delusion that the Irish leader clung to the desire for continued representation in the Imperial Parliament. The latter forbore to undeceive him in order to hew down the Imperial quota of contribution by allowing Gladstone to think that Ireland was making a supreme concession in surrendering her grip on the Imperial Parliament as well as her freedom of taxation. To the demand that Ireland should bear any proportion like one-fourteenth of the Imperial expenditure, he opposed an implacable negative. "Suppose you had another Napoleonic war on your hands," he said, with the prevision of a prophet, "with what conscience could you ask Ireland for a contribution of £20,000,000 or £30,000,000 a year for a war in which her only interest would be that her own veins would probably have to spend most of the blood?" Gladstone acknowledged the possibility, but threw out the suggestion that it might be avoided by fixing an equitable Imperial contribution for a considerable number of years. "That," Parnell remarked to me, "would depend upon the figure, and the old gentleman, when it comes to be a question of cash, is as hard as a moneylender; but it was the only glimmer of comfort he had to offer,

and we must keep him to it." Parnell kept his word. In its final draft, the Bill provided an Imperial contribution slightly over £3,000,000 a year for a period of thirty years, after which the 103 representatives of Ireland must be recalled to Westminster before any proposal to alter it could be entertained. Had the Bill passed, consequently, the Imperial Parliament would have had no power to demand an additional shilling up to a date when the late world-war had been already two years in operation, and even then only with the free consent of Ireland. Even if the abortive Home Rule Act of 1914 were in effective working order, Ireland's Imperial contribution would now come nearer to £30,000,000 a year than to the £3,000,000 of the Bill of 1886.

"We must allow the Bill to be introduced," he added, in a brown study of perplexity, "but it is a bad job. I am not sure how long we ought to stand it." I made the suggestion that the party, or at least some of its wiser heads, ought to be called together to take counsel in the emergency. "Pooh!" was the reply. "They will have to be called together, of course, but it can only be when our decision is taken. You saw what happened at the Westminster Palace Hotel the other night. In Dublin six weeks ago I called for any suggestions that might be helpful, and the only piece of constructive wisdom forthcoming was a proposal that we

should have the nomination of sheriffs and should promote police officers from the ranks." The allusion was to an informal gathering in Mr. Justin McCarthy's room at the Westminster Palace Hotel of half a dozen of the foremost men of the party, to whom, if my memory is not at fault, Michael Davitt was added, as a just tribute to his unique rank among his countrymen. Parnell submitted to them in a somewhat perfunctory way the main proposals of the Bill, without eliciting very much comment that was worth remembering. Parnell had an unlimited confidence in the mass of his party, and paid an unenvious respect and even deference to all the men who were its chief ornaments, whether in the House of Commons or in the country. Except on formal decorative occasions, however, when his graciousness to all his colleagues would have been pronounced faultless in a great officer of the Court, he could never be shaken in his attachment to the Napoleonic doctrine that no battle was ever won by a council of war. "One has got to take the risks," he used to say. "If you succeed, everybody will feel it was he who won, and if you fail they will all be obliged to you for saving them from the responsibility." I was alarmed to find traces, as well, of his natural secretiveness beginning to be intensified by a suspiciousness of two of his principal colleagues in connection with recent mis-

understandings affecting his relations with Gladstone. His sensitiveness, as I did not fail to remark to him, was curiously in disaccord with his own vehemently expressed belief that the Prime Minister might have saved the Bill had he courted the author of the Unauthorised Programme with a little more assiduity. As he took up his hat to break up our conference, it was with the observation he only could make: "I shall have another try before the old man speaks."

When the Old Man spoke, on the occasion of the introduction of the Bill, two days later, it was to the greatest audience man ever addressed—an Irish race panting with expectation and a world-wide British Empire bewildered and perturbed.

It is already beginning to be hard for those of a new time to understand the semi-divine worship with which even the hostile half of an assembly, which was really the world, heard a speech which few would now read through in Hansard without some stern call of duty. Gladstone's fame as an orator, great as that of the most supreme of actors, threatens to be not very much less ephemeral. Speech was for him a miracle worker, but wrought its miracles for the upliftment of mankind by dealing with their practical concerns, and adapting itself to plain men's intelligence and emotion. The language was not such as men conceive in a fine frenzy: for the sake of a more benign

human object, it had to offend the fastidious ear whenever needful by a sly reference to the arts of an "old parliamentary hand," or by some triumph of sublime "gag" like the cry, "The flowing tide is with us!" whose justification was that the cry did in fact all but turn the tide when it was running mountains high against him. The mere form of his sentences—prolonged, sinuous, broken into parenthesis after parenthesis, as is inevitable in the case of many-sided men who do not rigidly prepare their speeches by the midnight lamp—lost in literature what was gained by a variety of appeal whose convolutions, nevertheless, always ended quite surely in a roll of noble music. The shorthand note is as powerless as the ghastly phonograph to bequeath to after-times any adequate notion of the untranslatable things which were after all the soul of his greatness as an orator—the massive figure set four-square to all the world's contumely in a great cause—the immense leonine head framed in its silvery mane—the great kindled eye whose expression changed in the course of a single speech from majesty to scorn and from scorn to fun, and back again to heaven-kissing sublimity—above all, the incomparable melody of a voice which had the power of transmuting common words into a no less grand but a more tender Gregorian chant. Those who have heard the Silver Trumpets high up in the Dome of St. Peter's

at the Pope's High, High Mass will never forget their ravishment; but who is much the wiser for being told the fact?

.

A curiously different study was the man who, even for eyes beholding Gladstone at his greatest, had a stronger fascination still. Nobody was in any doubt that what Gladstone spoke, Parnell did. He was the creator of that grandiose scene, in which Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers, the Cabinet of yesterday and the Cabinet of to-day, moved on the Imperial chess-board as they were directed by the finger of the taciturn Irishman who but yesterday was their prisoner with Coercion Act after Coercion Act hurled at his head, and but the day before yesterday was the detested head of half a dozen crazy Obstructionists, without one English friend among all the complaisant hundreds whom he had just ejected from office or whom he had just replaced there. It may truly be said of him that at that height of glory, where even greatness might well have grown giddy, he forgot nothing except himself. If he was conscious at all of the universal gaze that sought him out before every other object in the House—call it defect of imagination, call it, more justly, inborn simplicity of character—it was to wonder where these silly people found the attraction. The legend of Parnell

as a mystery-man was the concoction of journalists who knew nothing of him except the caution with which he surrounded his personal movements, owing either to dangerous relationships with the secret societies, or to the fear of government espionage, or later to the malignity with which newspaper spies in search of a sensation dogged his private life. In essence, he was an unaffected Irish country gentleman, with a genius for command and for doing Ireland's business. He had few or none of the neurotic afflictions of genius, and of vanity least of all. He never even attained the vain distinction of a corner-seat. The high-bred, pallid, gently smiling Irish leader, in the midst of his clans—happy, indeed, with such pale happiness as visited a somewhat lonely life, but with no more pride of place, no more sense than the latest of his shy recruits from Ireland of being the central figure in a world-drama in which a Gladstone played a less enthralling, if more showy, part—was to the heart of him what he was in outward showing—a man absorbed in his designs, but in designs wherein his own personality was at zero-point. The conjecture can scarcely be far astray that, as the hours went on, his thoughts were only busy with how the Old Man was putting this point or that, how far Chamberlain's Federal coquetries might still leave a door open, how shrewdly "Tim" was galling, perhaps over-galling, the Lucifer

of the Unauthorised Programme, and, we may be quite sure, how poor was going to be his own contribution to the evening's entertainment.

That was, however, where the genius of the keen man of affairs left the rhetoricians in the shade. His observations did not contain a coloured sentence, much less a boastful one. They were weighty with the pressure of tremendous issues, but the words were simple, businesslike, and unpretentious. Above all that had gone before, they were listened to with a tension that was almost harrowing by a House half reassured and softened by a subduing calmness which suggested, "Here is the man to whom the rulership of a fretful realm may be safely confided," but still haunted by the old mistrust of the Parnell of their own melodramatic imaginings. The flash of passion that nearly always came once in his most prosily-phrased speeches was not missing this time, either. It burst from him in the midst of an offer of power and honour to the loyalist minority, but only as an inseparable part of the Irish nation. "No, sir, we cannot give up a single Irishman!"—it was this and nothing more; but the words went to Irish hearts like the throb of a nation's love, and live more potently than ever to-day as a rebuke to the English and Irish politicians who would fain coerce Ireland to give up more than a million of Irishmen and the

holiest places of her history, by way of realising her freedom. His general approbation of the Bill was couched in terms of softly-spoken homage to its author, but no attempt was made to cover up the weak points on which he laid an unerring finger. Upon the instability of an Irish Exchequer cruelly crippled in its taxing powers he touched with a cold insistence that must have reminded the Prime Minister of the interview of a couple of nights before, when he found himself confronted with the frank rejection of the entire measure if Irish fiscal independence were withheld. Those who knew did not mistake the meaning of his hint, however carefully wrapped up in velvet, that his final acceptance of the Bill must depend upon its being reconstructed in Committee in the three special departments of finance, police, and justice. For the moment, however, his assurance that the principles underlying the Bill contained a balsam which must end by healing the immemorial quarrel between the two nations impressed the sceptical mind more than all the radiant protestations of Gladstone and all the malign prophecies of his critics. After Parnell sat down the three remaining days of the debate were "a tale of little meaning, though the words were strong."

The opposition to the First Reading was not pressed to a division. Nobody was deceived as to what was to follow; but here

was an event greater than any since the Act of Renunciation of 1782 which acknowledged Ireland's independence. The system of government by force was carried to its grave with the body of the unfortunate Forster the day before the Home Rule Bill was coming on. Ireland's independence, in some shape, had become the first item in the programme of a Party which never pinned itself to a reform that did not ultimately reach the statute-book. It had become the one business in life of the greatest Englishman of his century. It had won the allegiance of the last Liberal Viceroy, Lord Spencer, and of the last Tory Viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, and of quite a bevy of ex-Chief Secretaries—Tories like Sir W. Hart Dyke and Sir Robert Peel; Liberal Unionists like Sir George Trevelyan, who was already a Home Ruler at heart; as well as robust Liberals such as Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Morley. Small wonder if, in the first speech in which he really found his sea-legs in the House of Commons, Mr. Morley flung across the floor at the hectoring Unionists the prediction: "If we cannot pass this Bill, you will pass it yourselves!"

CHAPTER VII

THE PARNELL OF THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN DAYS

On one of the early days of December (1886) I received a telegram from Parnell begging me to meet him in London upon an urgent confidential matter. His pallor when we last met, together with certain hints in the papers, led me to apprehend that some serious deterioration of his health must be in question. The next morning I was exploring the South-Eastern district in a hansom in search of the address named in the telegram—one of those commonplace George Streets or Bridge Streets which are sprinkled all over London by the dozen and baffle even the erudition of the cabman. Some necessary particular must have been forgotten by the transmitter. The only clue was that the telegram was handed in at the Greenwich office. For many hours, accordingly, we ranged all over that district until cabby's horse began to give out and his own suspicions to be awakened. A call at the house of Parnell's secretary (Mr. Henry Campbell, M.P.) yielded no informa-

tion as to the whereabouts of the address named. The wintry day had already darkened when, having in desperation called at a police station for information, I learned that we were at Eltham. The name gave me an unpleasant start, resolutely though I had shut out any belief in the tittle-tattle which Parnell's enemies of the more verminous sort had associated with it. The case was, however, becoming too desperate for hesitation. The station-sergeant I found familiar with Captain O'Shea's address, and thither I proceeded, sending in my card and the telegram to Captain O'Shea, with a request for assistance in locating the address therein named. I was shown into the drawing-room, only to be informed, after some delay, that Captain O'Shea was not at home, and that when Mrs. O'Shea last heard from Mr. Parnell his address was at some nursing home on the Kent Road, the exact number of which she had forgotten. The cabman brusquely told me he must go home, and asked me almost threateningly was I aware how much his fare was?

To my relief as well as surprise I found a commissionaire had reached the Westminster Palace Hotel before me with an unsigned letter from Parnell, expressing his regret that the appointment had, owing to some misunderstanding, miscarried, and asking me to meet him at half-past ten the

following morning on the walk at the back of the Greenwich Observatory leading towards the river. In Greenwich Park I found myself, accordingly, at the appointed hour in a clammy December mist that froze one to the bone and left little visible except the ugly carcase of the Observatory. After groping around helplessly before even discovering the river-side of the monster, I suddenly came upon Parnell's figure emerging from the gloom in a guise so strange and with a face so ghastly that the effect could scarcely have been more startling if it was his ghost I had met wandering in the eternal shades. He wore a gigantic fur cap, a shooting-jacket of rough tweed, a knitted woollen vest of bright scarlet, and a pair of shooting or wading boots reaching to the thighs—a costume that could not well have looked more bizarre in a dreary London park if the object had been to attract, and not to escape observation. But the overpowering fascination lay in the unearthly, half-extinguished eyes flickering mournfully out of their deep caverns, the complexion of dead clay, the overgrown fair beard, and the locks rolling down behind almost to the shoulders. It was the apparition of a poet plunged in some divine anguish, or a mad scientist mourning over the fate of some forlorn invention.

"Good God, Parnell, what induced you to trust yourself out in this infernal place

upon such a morning?" was my first cry of horror.

"Oh," he replied, with the smile, like a wintry sun, with which he was always able to waive off ill-fortune, "I am all right. But, I have been ill—very ill."

"My cab is still here. Let us drive to my hotel or anywhere else you please out of this murderous fog."

"I've seen as bad on the Wicklow hills. Nobody will observe us here."

There was not a human being to be seen in the clammy solitude except an outcast, too penniless for a dosshouse, who was enjoying the icy hospitalities of one of the park benches. As we walked up and down, we were soon too deep in more absorbing concerns to notice how the hours were flying and the frozen blast eating into our bones.

He came straight to business. The Liberals were alarmed at the Plan of Campaign, and so was he. The Old Man had been specially shocked by a speech of Mr. Dillon's—at Castlerea, if my memory serves—in which he announced that he and his friends were carefully taking a note of every resident magistrate, police officer, and Government official, who now distinguished himself against the people, and, as soon as the Liberals came back, would settle accounts with every man of them. This threat must be withdrawn or there must be

a break with the Liberal alliance. He spoke of Mr. Dillon with a vehement bitterness for which I was little prepared, and when I remonstrated, in terms of warm defence of his single-mindedness, retorted, somewhat tartly: "Yes, if a man does not intend mischief, he never understands that he is doing it." Had we not agreed that nothing must happen in Ireland that would fetter the Old Man in his appeal to England? Assuredly, was the reply; the question was whether the resistance in Ireland on our lines was not the only means of giving Gladstone a dog's chance with the English electorate? Was it certain that he did not himself realise that? If he did not, every message that reached us from the Liberal camp was strangely misleading.

It soon became evident that up to that moment Parnell had had no personal communication with Gladstone, and that, as has now been divulged, Mr. Morley was in reality his only informant as to the trend of Liberal feeling. It was no less clear that, in the seclusion of an exhausting illness, he had grown unacquainted with much that was happening in Ireland, and in his feverish condition was unduly excited by a message from one whose Chief Secretaryship had been distinguished by a nervous sensitiveness to the failings of Irishmen and a doubtless quite unconscious tenderness for their de-

tractors. There were one or two indications, also, of the influence of a silly article in *The Times* intimating that "Mr. Dillon's energy is to be accounted for by the fact that a section of the party of disorder have been always jealous of Mr. Parnell's ascendancy." In some such terms as these I put my own view of the matters that disquieted him: "There is not, and must never be, any real cause for misunderstanding between you and me. You are the supreme judge of policy. Once your mind is made up, I should sooner annihilate myself than cross you. So, I am convinced, would Dillon and Harrington. But, first, I beg of you, go to the fountain-head for information as to how Gladstone's thoughts are really working. We are filibusters in this adventure, and are content to carry our lives in our hands. We don't want to commit him any more than you. By all means let both of you keep the road open for repudiation if we break down. But, he dare not refuse to be frank with you in an emergency of this kind. If you are both genuinely persuaded we are doing mischief, it is not yet too late to pull up. No eviction has taken place. Not a pound of the collected rents has been spent. Dillon has not yet decided whether he will obey the Queen's Bench order to give securities. If he refuses and is locked up, and if I resign the charge of *United Ireland*, as I shall gladly do, to anybody

you name, the movement will quietly fizzle out."

"That," he said, "would be madness for you and for me and for the country. In our family we do not use the word 'madness' lightly. All I propose is that you should set bounds to your operations, or we shall be bankrupted and the Liberals will shake us off."

"That is a perfectly feasible proposition. Limitation to a few typical estates in each county is the mainspring of all our plans. We find already there is not one landlord in fifty whom the mere whisper of the Plan of Campaign in his neighbourhood will not bring to terms. But, if once it leaked out that we were restricted to a few sham fights, the frank abandonment of the entire venture would be fairer to the campaigners and to the country. The landlords would at once stiffen up and concentrate their whole force on the destruction of a few thousand victims. Rightly or wrongly, I took it for granted when we met here after the Chicago Convention that you desired (for most excellent reasons of State) to leave us as free a hand in Ireland as during the Spencer struggle, and did not want to be pestered for advice about this or that fiddle-faddle. And do recollect, Parnell, in fairness to us all, that you had nothing but good-will for the main purpose of our programme, which was to put your Bill into practical force in Ireland

if it was rejected in the House of Lords. That is just what we are marvellously well succeeding in doing, without a single deed of violence that should shock the most old-maidenly of Liberals. Give us a free rein for the rest of the winter, and in a great phrase of your own, the tenants will 'keep a firm grip of their homesteads' to such effect that, excepting the estates of a handful of lunatics like Clanricarde, you will have the landlords themselves clamouring the loudest to regularise the Plan of Campaign by passing your Bill next Session, and, better still, to expand Gibson's Purchase Bill into one for giving Landlordism what Gladstone called 'opulent obsequies.' We never had such a chance."

"My dear O'Brien, your spectacles ought to be coloured rose. You expect too much from human nature."

"May it not sometimes be a surer way of getting the best out of human nature than expecting too little?"

"I never generalise. The farmers had the chance of their lives in the No-Rent days, and they left us in the lurch. So they will leave you when they hear the crack of a sharp Coercion Act in their ears. You won't get the Nonconformists to stomach the plan for fighting the landlords with their own rents. Neither will you get the priests."

I was able to startle him with the informa-

tion (which, owing to his long sequestration in a sick-room, was new to him) that one of the foremost of the Irish prelates had already extended a benediction to our struggle, and that powerful priests were beginning to take an active part in marshalling the tenantry into the "Low Rent Offices."

He shook his head. "That is all very well until the day is going against you."

I burst into a hot eulogy of the priests as the saving salt and savour of Irish life.

His reply is eternally engraven in my memory. "Yes, the Irish priests, individually, are splendid fellows, but in a semi-revolutionary movement like ours a time comes sooner or later when a priest has to choose between Rome and Ireland, and he will always choose Rome. I hear Norfolk is busy in Rome already."

He put his finger on the weak spot in the Plan of Campaign. "What are you to do for money? You will never succeed in collecting your rents for a second year. The first exploit of your Mr. Dillon in the Land League year was to get the rich Limerick farmers on the Cloncurry estate to throw up their dairy-farms, and they have been a millstone around our necks ever since. As soon as the landlords begin evicting, you will have a dozen Cloncurry estates on your hands. How are you going to feed them?"

"There, of course, you have hit the blot. The Plan was only devised as an expedient for one winter. If we can force the Government to do for Ireland what they have sent General Buller to do for Kerry, next Session will see the end of the conflict. If the landlords should then proceed to evict the campaigned estates, it will be for sheer vengeance, and we can count upon no end of funds from America to resist and punish them. The risks have to be taken. Our first duty is to our own people. Will our Liberal friends be much the happier if we leave Ireland a corpse on Lord Salisbury's dissecting table? Will they prefer to call in the Moonlighters?"

"I'm not quite sure whether they may not," Parnell grimly interjected.

Whereupon I am afraid I stormed at the bare suggestion of a hypocrisy which could split hairs about the morality of the Plan of Campaign, and see more comfort in a bloodier background, or, more vilely still, look to a bloodstained Ireland as a pretext for ridding the Liberal Party of its Home Rule incubus. But I refused absolutely to do the meanest of the Liberal wirepullers the wrong of such a supposition, and again entreated Parnell to put the matter beyond doubt by claiming a definite intimation of Gladstone's own views in the emergency. If all our advices were not astray he and all the live men of his Home Rule crusade (with the possible

exception of Mr. Morley) would watch with a not unsympathetic eye a struggle which would once more illustrate the incapacity of the Westminster Parliament to enact honest legislation for Ireland unless under revolutionary pressure, and the powerlessness of Coercion to take the place of just government.

Parnell was manifestly relieved to be informed of the spirit in which the Plan of Campaign movement had been originated, and in particular, perhaps, to find that, of the two members of the Party of whom he was beginning to entertain a settled distrust, one was potential chiefly by the multiplicity of his speeches, and the other had, to my own deep regret, ceased to interfere actively at all. We, without difficulty, arrived at an agreement that the Castlerea threat should be without fracas explained away, that upon eight or ten estates definitely named where the Plan of Campaign was already in operation (which, to the best of my recollection, were the Clanricarde, De Freyne, Dillon, Ponsonby, Brooke, Massereene, Mitchelstown, and, I think, Vandeleur estates), the movement was to be prosecuted with unabated vigour, but that no new estate was to be accepted for entrance into the combination, unless under special circumstances where other powerful landlords might take advantage of the limitation of the struggle

to combine for the extermination of the occupants of the campaigned estates. And this agreement was, in all substantial particulars, observed throughout all the subsequent years.

Mr. Morley's version of the above transaction (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, pp. 370–1) may here be usefully quoted.

"*December* 7, 1886. Mr. Parnell called, looking very ill and worn. He wished to know what I thought of the effect of the Plan of Campaign upon public opinion. 'If you mean in Ireland,' I said, 'of course I have no view, and it would be worth nothing if I had. In England, the effect is wholly bad; it offends almost more even than outrages.' He said he had been very ill and had taken no part, so that he stands free and uncommitted. He was anxious to have it fully understood that the fixed point in his tactics is to maintain the alliance with the English Liberals. He referred with much bitterness, and very justifiable too, to the fact that when Ireland seemed to be quiet some short time back, the Government had at once begun to draw away from all their promises of remedial legislation. If, now, rents were paid, meetings abandoned, and newspapers moderated, the same thing would happen over again as usual. However, he would send for a certain one of his lieutenants,

and would press for an immediate cessation of the violent speeches.

"*December* 12. Mr. Parnell came, and we had a prolonged conversation. The lieutenant had come over, and had defended the Plan of Campaign. Mr. Parnell persevered in his dissent and disapproval, and they parted with the understanding that the meetings should be dropped, and the movement calmed as much as could be. I told him that I had heard from Mr. Gladstone, and that he could not possibly show any tolerance for illegalities."

That the maintenance of the Liberal alliance—or, to be more precise, the determination to give Gladstone's appeal to Britain the most patient and generous fair play—was the fixed point of the policy of Parnell and of us all is, of course, a truism. That had been already sufficiently established by the story of the Chicago Convention. Parnell had certainly given me the impression, if it matters much, that the conversation originated with Mr. Morley, and not with himself. The above extracts now make it clear that, as I had suspected, Parnell had not been in communication with Gladstone at all on the subject and that the *obiter dictum*, "in England, the effect" (of the Plan of Campaign) "is wholly bad; it offends almost more even than outrages,"

came wholly from Mr. Morley himself. The wisdom of the oracle may be sufficiently estimated from the fact that the Plan of Campaign struggle was for the next three years enthusiastically participated in by nearly all the best men, women, and newspapers of the Liberal Party in the tumult of eviction scenes, and, some of them, in the cells of Irish jails; that Gladstone himself selected from one of the most tragic battlefields of the campaign the watchword, "Remember Mitchelstown," which carried the Liberal flag to victory from constituency to constituency in England, and that "the effect in England" was so "wholly bad" that nothing short of the cataclysm of the Divorce Court in 1890 could have prevented the struggle in Ireland from eventuating in an overpowering British majority for Home Rule.

Mr. Morley's extracts from the Liberal leader's own comment on his report of the Parnell interview is no less significant.

"Hawarden, *December* 8, 1886. I have received your very clear statement and reply in much haste for the post—making the same request as yours for a return. I am glad to find the —— speech is likely to be neutralised. I hope effectually. It was really very bad. I am glad you write to ——. 2. As to the campaign in Ireland, I do not at present feel the force of Hartington's

appeal to me to speak. I do not recollect that he ever spoke out about Churchill, of whom he is for the time the enthusiastic follower. 3. . . . Upon the whole I suppose he sees he cannot have countenance from us in the Plan of Campaign. *The question rather is how much disavowal.* I have contradicted a Tory figment in Glasgow that I had approved."

It is here obvious that, with Gladstone as with Parnell, the few injudicious sentences of the Castlerea speech in their bearing upon a future Home Rule Bill, bulked more largely than the Plan of Campaign in their anxieties.[1] It may be surmised that this will be made still clearer whenever the "letter to ——" which Gladstone was "glad you are writing" comes to see the light. The sentence, "Upon the whole I suppose he (Parnell) sees he cannot have countenance from us in the Plan of Campaign" seems to be in direct contradiction to the impression that Parnell himself "persisted in his dissent and disapproval," while Mr. Morley's report that Parnell and I

[1] The needlessness of Mr. Morley's alarms is placed beyond controversy by Gladstone's own record of his interview with Parnell in Hawarden a week or two afterwards, which does not contain the smallest allusion to the Plan of Campaign difficulty, but, on the contrary, as the result of a few hours' colloquy with the Irish leader, winds up with the exhilarating conclusion: "He is certainly one of the very best people to deal with that I have ever known" (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, p. 420).

" parted with the understanding that the meetings should be dropped " arose from a misunderstanding on his part so patent that I was obliged to leave London by the next morning's Irish mail to address a meeting of some thousands of people on the Clanricarde estate. " *The question rather is how much disavowal* " reveals the genuine touch of the Old Parliamentary Hand. He acknowledges no greater moral compulsion to lecture Irishmen than Lord Hartington did to lecture the Lord Randolph Churchill of the Belfast blood dance, just as in the graver emergency of 1890 Gladstone (as we now know from Lord Morley's amazing *Recollections*) would fain have put in the fire the " nullity " letter which brought to ruin the sublimest enterprise of his life. It is one more added to " The Three Sorrows of Irish Story-telling " that the Englishman whom Ireland, and Parnell as well, trusted more implicitly even than Gladstone should have been of all men he who in the one case as in the other sicklied over the old statesman's truer judgment with a timidity or a pagan virtue of his own, and in the later and more devastating case should have succeeded.

The opaque greenish-yellow fog was thickening into a darkness rendered all the gloomier by the tolling of the ships' bells in the river before our discussions, as we walked up and down the path behind the

Observatory, were over. Then happened an incident too characteristic of an extraordinary man to be omitted. "Is your cab still outside?" Parnell asked. "Would you mind driving me into town?"

After all the elaborate precautions to conceal our meeting, and after spending hours which might well have given him his death-stroke parading a remote park under every possible discomfort in order to avoid observation in more frequented quarters, he jumped into the cab to dine with me in one of the most conspicuous venues in London—the French Room of the Criterion Restaurant. Was it an eccentricity? Was it perhaps the immense loneliness of a life dogged by incessant precautions?—a longing for companionship which made him burst through all fetters and safeguards in mere recklessness? He selected some trifle—*ris de veau* or the like—from the copious menu, with his customary pint of Rhine wine. It was impossible not to be deeply moved—not, indeed, to be frightened—at sight of his ashen face and the region of darkness under his eyes. He conversed with a greater communicativeness, in the intimate sense, than I can remember him ever to have done before, speaking in gentle and caressing tones.

Traces of his talk during the evening until the last of the other diners had trickled out linger persistently in my memory. He had

suffered much and long from some grave kidney trouble, as he gave me to understand, with all the horrors of insomnia supervening. But unlike most invalids, who are apt to cherish their ailments, he made no complaints, and entered into no particulars. It must have been some intolerable mental picture of his long and lonely sufferings that tempted me to say: "Good heavens, Parnell, it is awful to think of you alone in a London lodging-house at such a time. Why on earth should you not get some lady of your family to come over and take care of you?" (How tragic the indiscretion was, all the world now knows.)

"We are a peculiar family," was his reply. "We are all very fond of one another, but, somehow, we do not get on so well when we are too much together. By the way," he broke out, "have you heard anything of late of my sister, Anna?" I had only heard that she had left Ireland to settle down in a painters' colony on the Cornwall coast. "She has never spoken a word to me since I stopped that account of the Ladies' Land League," he observed with a humorous gleam in his eye. "Anna might have been a great painter—she might be great in anything."

How truly he diagnosed the family mentality was proved when the sister who had never forgiven him in his days of power swooped to the defence of his memory after

his death with a withering scorn for his foes, ere her own life of magnificent possibilities unsatisfied was characteristically closed in an attempt to swim her way through the breakers around the Cornwall cliffs in mid-winter in defiance of all warnings.

It was, I think, in this connection he made the observation: "Life is not supportable without the friendship of a woman, be she good or bad. Take even the Saints." And my surprise could not have been greater had he quoted from the *Vedas* or from the *Koran* when he instanced the cases of great and holy saints like St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, and St. Francis de Sales, who owed half the success of their divine work in the world to the collaboration of no less great and holy women. "You would never have got young men to sacrifice themselves for so unlucky a country as Ireland," he added with a smile, "only that they pictured her as a woman. That is what makes the risks worth taking."

Our chat turned on his own early life. He referred to his service in the Wicklow Militia, and said he thought he was born to be a soldier, "but not under the English flag. I was too much my mother's son for that." If the Civil War had lasted much longer, he would have volunteered for the North. The Irish American officers who

came over to organise the Fenian Rising in 1865, and whom he constantly met in his mother's house in Dublin, urged him to join them if war should break out over the Alabama claims. "That was the nearest I ever got to high treason. But somehow they and I did not hit it off, and England had the good sense to pay up." For the soul of Fenianism, as distinguished from Fenian military plans, or planlessness, he entertained a lifelong reverence.

The glass veered to religion, or, as he preferred to put it, to "that something in life we don't understand and never will." That was as far as he would go in the way of dogmatic theology. But that there must be some presiding government in Nature he took for granted, since otherwise this world, with all its beauty and its never-ending miseries, would be too senseless even to be a diabolical practical joke. He went further, and, groping as we are in a mysterious ignorance, defended superstition—even his own fads about magpies and the number thirteen—as containing some modicum of truth.

"Don't you think the Apostles had just as lively a horror of the number thirteen the day after the Last Supper? I should never have burned the witches of old. Macbeth's mistake was not in consulting the witches, but in only believing the portion that pleased him in their advice. You never know in

what strange quarters knowledge may be hidden. The foolishness of The Cross was the breath of life of Christianity."

His astronomical researches, modest though I presume them to have been, made him a firm believer in the plurality of worlds, and even in their habitability. "Science will never do anything worth talking about until it gets outside this little world. I don't see why it should not, some day. Once inoculate a man with some virus that will enable him to support life in a new atmosphere, and a voyage to the planets or even to the stars won't be much more difficult than that of Columbus when he set out to discover America."

And from this unaccustomed height of speculation he drifted into the more congenial work of explaining, or rather soliloquising about, the ways and means of estimating the weights and distances of the planetary and starry worlds, and the reasons for inferring that they must all have generative powers as universally active as our own animal, vegetable, and mineral life. Feeling myself quite unsafe among those giddy mechanical immensities, I tried to recall him to more accessible latitudes by asking:

"Do you really believe that, even if science sails to the stars, it can ever in itself explain the mystery of life or its purpose?" His reply was: "I do not. The Irish peasant's faith makes him a happier man

under his thatch than a man of science can ever be."

One other circumstance is worth recording as an instance of the power of detachment peculiar to the man. During our three or fours hours' table-talk he did not revert, directly or indirectly, to the Plan of Campaign, or to the Castlerea speech.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PARNELL OF THE DIVORCE COURT

For all who do not care to dwell, maggot-like, in the sores of great lives, two extracts will deal sufficiently with the episode of the Divorce Court.

The first is the only authentic letter written by Parnell himself on the subject. It was written to me while the threatened suit was still pending:

"London,
Jan. 14, 1890.

"My dear O'Brien,

"I thank you very much indeed for your kind letter, which I shall always highly prize. If this case is ever fully gone into (*a matter which is exceedingly doubtful*) you may rest assured that it will be shown that the dishonour and the discredit have not been on my side.

"I trust you will not allow anything to interfere with the certainty of your being able to be present at the opening of the Session.

"Believe me, yours very sincerely,

"Chas. S. Parnell.

"I was most anxious to write you sooner, but have been overwhelmed with law and other business."

The second is a penitential reflection uttered long after the Divorce trial and after Parnell's death by the genial Sir Frank Lockwood (who was counsel for Mrs. O'Shea):

"Parnell was cruelly wronged all round. There is a great reaction in England in his favour. I am not altogether without remorse myself."

Men of the world, reading between the lines of those two communications, will have no difficulty in making out their meaning. A hard meaning, but the meaning of a man for whom the proceedings in the Divorce Court were not the jousts of a tawdry Court of Love, but a new conspiracy, where the Parnell Commission Court conspiracy had failed, to overwhelm him with personal ruin because his ruin must infallibly bring the ruin of the Irish Cause with it.

A man in a great station, carrying the fate of an unhappy nation with him as he rises or falls, has no excuse except the weakliness of all human kind for running tragic risks at the peril of millions of innocent third parties. Sin will not escape its shadow. At the same time, it must not be

forgotten that the circumstances of the O'Shea *ménage* were of a character to leave little room for the righteous rage and indignation that will always smite the wrecker of a happy household. There was no such home and no such wrecker. Furthermore, Parnell was manifestly convinced that the complaint against himself would so far outpass the toleration of plain men—being, indeed, the mere poetry to sugar over a villainous political intrigue—that it would never be made public at all, if he could only return his answer to it in the witness-box. The mere intimation that Parnell intended to present himself in the witness-box would have been sufficient to prevent the petition from ever coming to trial. He and Frank Lockwood came to the point of physical violence in the lawyer's chambers before the practical certainty of Parnell and his country being saved from the ministers of foul-play was given over. We require no gloss to understand where the remorse of the great counsel for the respondent came in. One impulse of the kind of womanly love which makes love adorable, and a country—his country—would have been saved, and her enemies forced to digest the venom of their spleen; the sordid scandals that had been buzzing around the political smoke-rooms for years before would have been staled and antiquated; the hopes from the Divorce Court would have ended like the hopes from the Parnell

Commission Court, in overthrow for all that was mean and foul in human affairs; and before twelve months were over, the grey shadows of death would have stolen all the same over the pallid brow, to satiate the delicate sense of justice disappointed in the Divorce Court; but also, doubtless, to leave behind the certainty of an Irish settlement never since achieved, and not likely to be achieved hereafter.

The advice of Parnell was not taken; his vehement remonstrance was beaten down; and all was lost.

.

But not even yet, if Ireland had not fallen a victim to one whose austere electioneering sanctity was harder to bear than the severe virtue of the petitioner in the Divorce Court. For we now know that it was not Gladstone who made war on Parnell in his hour of stress, but Morley who—it must be straightly said—falsely represented Gladstone to the Irish members and the Irish people, as saying the direct opposite of what his own judgment prompted him to say. The hapless Irish race were not only devoted to destruction for Parnell's private sin, but by the Englishman they most trusted were kept in the dark as to Gladstone's real opinion on the point which meant all to Ireland, and were dragged through ten miserable years of civil strife

under the utterly false delusion that they were asked to choose between sending Gladstone and Home Rule to their graves, or immolating an Irish leader greater than Gladstone, and worlds more truly respectable than Morley's electioneering caucus. Ireland was undone for a quarter of a century by sheer blind-man's buff and foolery.

CHAPTER IX

PARNELL AND HIS LIBERAL ALLIES

As the reader already knows, Sir Frank Lockwood made the observation, some years after Parnell's death: "Parnell was cruelly wronged all round. There is a great reaction in England in his favour. I am not altogether without remorse myself." His conclusion will carry new force in the eyes of Irish readers of Lord Morley's fascinating volumes of *Recollections*.[1] It is not too much to say that if the Irish Party could have read the story, there for the first time revealed, of Gladstone's frame of mind up to the day before Parnell's re-election, they would never have deposed their leader. They acted in the belief that, both as a moralist and as a politician, the Liberal leader had immutably made up his mind that either he or Parnell must go. We are here informed it was nothing of the kind. Gladstone declined point-blank to commit himself to any pontifical pronouncement of his own as a party leader on the issue of morals. We learn for the first time that, even on

[1] *Recollections*, by John Viscount Morley, O.M., Hon. Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. London: Macmillan & Co., 1917.

the question of his own continuance in the Liberal leadership, he was so far from having formed any irrevocable resolution, that he deliberately omitted from the final draft of his letter the famous passage that Parnell's re-election "would render my retention of the leadership of the Liberal Party almost a nullity." That was the passage which alone could have justified the Irish Party in facing the appalling risks of parting with the leader who was the personification of the unity of their race. The rest of the Gladstone letter would have been taken as, *quantum valeat*, the advice of an anxious friend, who was careful even to qualify it by confining his objection to Parnell's continuance "at the present moment." With a calmness that takes one's breath away. Lord Morley quotes from his Diary the proofs that Gladstone on second thoughts struck out the passage from the original draft, and that it was Mr. John Morley himself—*et tu Brute!*—who insisted—with a mournful success—upon its restoration to the letter as published. Nobody could honestly harbour any suspicion of bad faith on the part of men of the Gladstone or Morley build. What was suspected and is now proved is that the Liberal leaders failed to come to any clear decision of their own in the crisis, and failed to make their Irish allies aware even of the halting conclusion they had come to. The Irish Party was

encouraged to destroy a leader whom Gladstone declared to be "a political genius of most uncommon order" and who in Lord Morley's own words "fought the Parliament with implacable energy, unerring skill, and bewildering success," and to commit their country to a ten years' civil war, in tragic ignorance of what they were doing or even of what the Liberal leaders were really thinking.

Parnell's own contributions to the catastrophe are not to be ignored. Almost any other man in his position would have from the start taken his own Party and his English allies freely into consultation as to where lay the line of public safety—whether in showing an immovable front, or in appeasing the storm by a voluntary withdrawal "at the present moment." In either event, he would have secured the unbreakable allegiance of his own people and, it cannot be doubted, of those of his Liberal allies who were something more than "half-baked Home Rulers," and to whom, indeed, the preservation of his influence was, at the time, scarcely less essential than to Ireland. But both Parnell's value and his defects lay in his not being like other men. It must not be forgotten that up to the moment when he was debarred from giving evidence himself, he was convinced either that the divorce proceedings would not be persisted in, or that he would leave the witness-box

with public opinion anything but implacably estranged from him. For another thing, of the only two members of his Party whom he had of late years intimately confided in, one was in broken health in London and the other was in America. And, for another, he thought he knew the Liberal chiefs well enough to forecast (with some accuracy, as it now appears) their calculations in the emergency, and he probably (with less accuracy) concluded that they would rather thank him for saving them the trouble of making up their minds until Ireland's attitude was quite clear.

He might well have been confirmed in this latter assumption by the interview, of enthralling human interest, which Lord Morley here for the first time reports to the public, between the Irish leader and himself in his hotel at Brighton on the 10th of November—"on the very eve of this dire wreck"—a bare week before the decree in the Divorce Court. Who would not have expected at such an hour a conversation above all things dwelling upon those anxieties of the Liberal leaders which, before two weeks were over, they were to shatter a five years' alliance by publishing to the world in a panic? Not a rumble of the tempest spoiled that pleasant evening. The awful possibilities of the succeeding week are not even alluded to, until the last paragraph of the interview, as in the postscript of the

legendary lady's letter. We have some entertaining small talk about Parnell's "fine and easy carriage and unaffected dignity," about the number of cigars he smoked, and his way of liking to sit close to the fire; about his exquisitely Parnellite query: "Who is the Under-Secretary? I forget"; about his talking little of himself, and "with much benignity as to his colleagues save as to ——, the very mention of whom made him angry," and this characteristic touch: "About 11.30 R. appeared. Parnell very courteous and pleasant and neither frigid nor stiff with her." All of which would be delightful enough, except as the prologue to a tragedy. The eminent English statesman who two weeks afterwards was to deliver an ultimatum of dishonour to his guest betrayed not the remotest sense that the sky was cracking overhead.

It was not an interview to make provision for an impending crash, but a cordial and deferential consultation with the Irish leader as to who was to be Viceroy and who Chief Secretary of the country of which he was presently to be the ruler. "I opened the conversation by saying that we were anxious to know what line he meant to take on Land Purchase." The response, by the way, was one that would have saved England from £60,000,000 to £70,000,000 on subsequent Land Purchase loans, while rescuing the great mass of the small farmers

once for all from landlordism, and preserving the richest of the grazing lands for more beneficent national uses. But that is another story, although here we have Parnell as the cool, practical statesman, even while the *fractus orbis* was falling.

"I sounded him as to Spencer for Viceroy. He saw no objection to S., but slightly in his favour as a man knowing the ropes. Then for Chief Secretary. 'I assume that it is quite out of the question,' I asked guilelessly, 'that you should take it yourself?' 'Oh yes, quite—or that any of my Party should join a Government.' 'Then what do you say to —— or ——?' 'But surely there is no doubt you would take it yourself?' 'Of course, I should be entirely in Mr. G.'s hands in the matter.' 'Your record, you see, is so clear.'"

The co-respondent in the Divorce Court is invited to dispense like a king great offices of State which he quietly pushes aside for himself. "In every word one felt the voice of the man looking at Government, putting his finger on the difficulties of managing men, using occasions, drawing decisive lines, sending his glance forward and around." High homage, and true: just the man to be asked frankly to send his glance forward for a week and draw decisive lines as to the consequences it might bring for the Irish nation and the Liberal Party.

At long last, and as it were casually, we come to what ought to have been the beginning and end of the interview:

"At the end of dinner I said to him, 'There's one point on which I have no right to speak to you—and if you don't like it, you can say so. But it is important we should know whether certain legal proceedings soon to come on are likely to end in your disappearance from the lead for a time?' He smiled all over his face, playing with his fork.

"'My disappearance! Oh, no! No chance of it. Nothing in the least leading to disappearance, so far as I am concerned, will come out of the legal proceedings. The other side don't know what a broken-kneed horse they are riding.' 'I'm delighted to hear that,' said I, 'for I, for my part, of course, regard you as vital to the whole business.' 'Well,' he said, 'the Irish people are very slow to give a man their confidence, and they are still more slow to withdraw it.' I inferred from his talk of the broken-kneed horse that he meant there would be no adverse decree."

One is tempted respectfully to protest that Mr. Morley had as good a "right" and even duty "to speak to" the Irish leader upon the topic, however delicate, then "on the very eve of this dire wreck," as he had

a fortnight afterwards in language of menace and when menace came too late. "I inferred from his talk of the broken-kneed horse that he meant there would be no adverse decree." O saintly simplicity! For nine months previously the divorce proceedings had been public property and had engaged the anxiety of all friends of the great Irishman and of the Irish Cause. So long before as January 14, 1890, in reply to an uneasy inquiry from the present writer, Parnell wrote almost exactly the same thing that he said to Mr. Morley in November in his Brighton hotel:

"If this case is ever fully gone into, a matter which is exceedingly doubtful, you may rest assured that it will be shown that the dishonour and discredit have not been upon my side."

I was at least as uninformed as Mr. Morley as to the grievous antecedents of the case, but my own passionate eagerness to grasp at any charitable construction did not certainly lead me to the comfortable conclusion that "he meant there would be no adverse decree." The inference seemed only too manifest that "if the case was ever fully gone into," although his own technical legal responsibility might not be successfully evaded, it would not be against "my side" the storm of public indignation

and disgust would be directed. Parnell made no concealment of his belief that the divorce proceedings were simply a new form of vengeance by the enemies whose conspiracy to destroy him by the forged letters had come to grief before the Three Judges. It ought not to have required much imagination to comprehend that "the broken-kneed horse which the other side were riding" was the broken-kneed witness who, alone of witnesses claiming to be men of honour, swore that the murderous letters were in the handwriting of Parnell, which were a few weeks afterwards proved to be clumsy forgeries of the suicide Pigott. The case was "never *fully* gone into" because Parnell was not allowed to go into the witness-box for a reason which perhaps Sir Frank Lockwood felt professionally bound not to disclose to his colleague, but which is now notorious enough, and consequently those who laid their money on "the broken-kneed horse" were not disappointed. But it is known that, even while the case was at hearing, Parnell persisted in his struggle to have his evidence heard.

"Parnell departed just upon midnight," and that appears to have been the only allusion in the course of an interview of three hours and a half to the danger which, a week later, was to exclude the Liberal Party from effective power for sixteen years, and to adjourn Home Rule over a generation

of men. It is a matter for lasting regret that Mr. Morley did not at least press upon his guest the vital necessity for close communication between his Liberal allies and himself in the next few critical days, and did not even insist upon knowing where any urgent message would reach him, although they happened to be both living at the same moment in the same not very far-spreading township. It is gravely to be feared that Parnell left the Hôtel Métropole with the fixed belief that the only thing that really mattered was the discomfiture of "the broken-kneed horse," of which he was absolutely confident "if the case should be *fully* gone into," and that, even if the worst should happen, the Liberal leaders would be rather thankful to him than otherwise for not saddling them with too close a responsibility for whatever might be his own decision.

Parnell did not appear in the witness-box, and the divorce decree was pronounced. Three days afterwards the National Liberal Federation met at Sheffield, Harcourt and Mr. Morley being Gladstone's delegates. It is obvious from his communications with his lieutenants that Gladstone, though naturally alarmed at the fierceness of the periodical fit of British virtue which used to make Macaulay merry, had not yet come to a clear decision upon the issue which he ought to have been for months past revolving. As

to the moral issue, indeed, his mind was quite made up. "I think it plain that we have nothing to say and nothing to do in the matter. The Party is as distinct from us as that of Smith or Hartington." His own Irish Lord Chancellor and his own Irish Attorney-General had, indeed, taken a foremost part in the Leinster Hall meeting proclaiming the necessity, come what might, of retaining Parnell as, in Mr. Healy's phrase of that night, "no longer an individual but a national institution." "I own to some surprise," the Liberal leader somewhat slily added, "at the apparent facility with which the R.C. bishops and clergy appear to take the continued leadership, but they may have tried the ground and found it would not *bear*. It is the Irish Parliamentary Party and that alone to which we have to look" for that decision against their incomparable leader which a man of Gladstone's own spotless morality and transcendent genius as a statesman had not enabled him to arrive at for himself. The Scotch sentence, "playful but pithy and to the point," about Parnell's continued leadership, "It'll na dee," which was his *consigne* to his lieutenants in Sheffield, was not of the loftiest, nor even of the clearest, especially as it was qualified by the hint that he only "said it to himself in the interior and silent forum."

Harcourt and Mr. Morley evidently so understood him, for at the meeting of the

great Liberal organisation they did nothing more than pull the excellent Dr. Spence Watson by the coat-tails when he threatened to break out into "a red-hot protest against Parnell." The practical problem was how far Mr. Stead's divine indignation in the *Pall Mall Gazette* would stampede the Party; and at Sheffield, however passionate and genuine the wrath of the Nonconformists was, nothing irrevocable came of it. Mr. Morley's own comment on the Party's *état d'âme* is not without its touch of comedy in so grave a man.

"*November* 21.—Heard of the angry currents running against Parnell's continued leadership. It was not only the devout world, the secular caucus man was quite as strong. The breach of moral law, one must remember, was not all. It was accompanied by small incidents that lent themselves to ridicule and a sense of squalor. How could candidate or voter fight under a banner so peculiarly tainted?"

In plainer terms, electioneering prospects were harmed by some vulgar bits of evidence which, if Parnell had been heard in the witness-box, might have taken a very different colour.

Lord Morley's pages may be searched in vain for any conclusive proofs that the Nonconformist tornado, soul-shaking though

for the moment its ravages indubitably were, would have raged on until the General Election without the fresh fuel it very quickly received. The only weighty evidence offered is that of Schnadhorst, the high-priest of the caucus, who was already in the decline of his powers, and we read this remarkable entry in Mr. Morley's Diary:

"*November* 23.—Schnadhorst, the head of our party organisation, called: thinks the election fatally lost by this desperate business; one candidate bolted already, and new ones would be all the less likely to come forward. 'But then,' I said, 'this means the end of Mr. G.'s career.' 'Would it be a bad end?' he asked. 'What a pity,' said I, 'that such a fine set of fellows as we saw at Sheffield should be broken up.' 'They won't break up,' he answered; 'they will rally to you, and by that I mean you personally.' 'If Mr. G. goes, I fancy that I go too.' 'I expected,' he said, 'that this would pass through your mind, but it must not lodge there.'"

The plain English of which, again, seems to be that Schnadhorst and his brother Tapers and Tadpoles thought it a good opportunity of getting rid of Gladstone and the Parnell alliance, and made a clumsy attempt to entice into the plot a man of whose honesty of soul only party wire-pullers of the Schnad-

horst brand could have ever entertained a suspicion.

Not only did Sheffield sensibly hold its tongue. "Unionists did not abuse the advantage of having one of the Ten Commandments on their side." Their chief oracle, the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote:

"It is no satisfaction to us to feel the political adversary, whose abilities and prowess it was impossible not to respect, has been overthrown by irrelevant accident, wholly unconnected with the struggle in which we are engaged."

Chamberlain himself, with whom (it is one of the surprises of the book) Mr. Morley dined in the week of the explosion,

"was extremely pleasant; no crowing or jubilation, but rather disgusted as he said that a controversy in which all the best brains in Parliament and out of it had been at work for five years should be at last decided, not on the merits but by an accident."

And he added the sage advice: "What we ought to do, my dear Morley, is to keep quiet," with, however, as in Schnadhorst's case, the suggestion of a deal for "revising the conditions": that is, for repudiating Home Rule.

Sheffield was on the 24th of November. Parliament was to meet in a few days, and the Irish Party for their annual election of a chairman. The fluid mind of the Liberal leaders had at last to be solidified. The scene was the library in Gladstone's house in Carlton Gardens. In a position of perplexity, such as even he had never faced before, Gladstone seems to have retained what the French call the "measure" of a statesman for whom, whatever the whisper of the moralist "in the interior and silent forum," punishment for the sin of one man had to be weighed against the happiness of innocent millions in Ireland. Harcourt, who frankly played the politician throughout,

"had come around to the view that Parnell should be told to go, without any *égards* and without waiting for spontaneous action on his part. I remonstrated, and Mr. G. strongly took the same line. 'I must think of the after-reckoning,' he said with emphasis."

An after-reckoning, truly, which, even in the less brutal form in which the blow was struck, still burns in the blood of Ireland a generation later! Harcourt rode the moral high horse with the solemnity of a Mr. Pecksniff, although a Mr. Pecksniff with a certain comic twinkle of the eye.

"Harcourt was very strong that in the communication to Parnell Mr. G. should express his own opinion that the immorality itself had made him unfit and impossible, and not merely found himself on the opinion of the party upon the immorality. 'The party would expect it,' he said, 'would not be satisfied otherwise; Mr. G.'s moral reputation required it.' Mr. G. stoutly fought any such position. 'What,' cried Mr. G., 'because a man is what is called leader of a party, does that constitute him a judge and accuser of faith and morals? I will not accept it. It would make life intolerable.'"

A fine burst of the higher morality turning a scornful back upon the morals of the electioneering caucus! Under hard pressure from Harcourt, Gladstone had inserted in the original draft of the letter to be communicated to Parnell the vital passage about his leadership of the Liberal Party being reduced almost to a nullity. At the consultation in Carlton Gardens he had come to an altered view when he sat down to write the letter in its final form. The passage making it a choice for Ireland between dismissing Parnell and dismissing Gladstone was deleted. What followed is so startling that, in justice to Lord Morley, his own account of it must be quoted:

"At 8 to dinner in Stratton Street. I sat

next to Granville, and next to him was Mr. G. We were all gay enough, and as unlike as possible to a marooned crew. Towards the end of the feast Mr. G. handed to me, at the back of Granville's chair, the draft of the famous letter in an unsealed envelope. While he read the Queen's Speech to the rest, I perused and reperused the letter; Granville also read it. I said to Mr. G. across Granville, 'But you have not put in the very thing that would be most likely of all things to move him.' [Referring to the statement in the original draft that Parnell's retirement would mean the nullity of Gladstone's leadership.] Harcourt again regretted that it was addressed to me and not to P., and agreed with me that it ought to be strengthened as I had indicated, if it was meant really to affect P.'s mind. Mr. G. rose, went to the writing table, *and with me standing by, wrote, on a sheet of Arnold M.'s grey paper, the important insertion. I marked then and there under his eyes the point at which the insertion was to be made, and put the whole into my pocket.* Nobody else besides *H. was consulted about it, or saw it.* After the letter came to be printed Mr. G. remarked to me that he thought the insertion was to be a postscript. He did not complain nor care, but was it not so? 'No,' I said, 'it really was not. I marked the place in pencil at the moment.' Just imagine. 'P.S.—By the way, I forgot to mention that if he does

not go, my leadership of the Liberal Party is reduced to a nullity.' What a postscript, to be sure!"

History will perhaps rather remark, "What a kettle of fish, to be sure!" Gladstone's own considered judgment was overborne, and by the man from whom of all mankind the Irish people would have least expected it. Earl Spencer, Lord Morley tells us,—

"was the one man who doubted whether we were right in putting any screw at all upon Parnell, and pressed earnestly that P. was the only man who could drive the Irish team. Most true—if only there were no English electors to be thought of."

Lord Spencer, whose conversion to Home Rule had moved the English electors even more than Gladstone's, might have had his reply to that somewhat crude opportunist comment. Whether Spencer's sage advice had told upon the Liberal leader—whether, on second thoughts, he had come to the conclusion that his leadership might not be altogether a nullity, after all, in spite of Mr. Stead's hot-gospelling, or that his threat addressed to a proud man and a proud nation, might defeat its purpose—as it horribly did—we shall not now, perhaps, ever know. But what is not doubtful is that the change of front operated while Mr. Morley was

standing behind his chair was the signal for all the mischief that followed. Gladstone's own compunctious visitings, as soon as the letter was made public, and his wistful question to Mr. Morley a few months later: "You have no regrets at the course we took?"—set one mournfully speculating what might have been, had there been a little more adroitness and less haste.

The decision taken, for good or ill, what mattered next, and above all, was that it should be communicated to the Irish leader and to his Party in good time and by the most authoritative and acceptable ambassador. But here blunder followed blunder. Mr. Morley was designated as the right ambassador, by the fact that it was to him the momentous missive was addressed, as well as by his cordial relations with Parnell only a week before. The ambassador and the man to whom his embassy was addressed unhappily failed to come together before all the fat was in the fire. The fault lay, of course, largely—if not mainly—with Parnell's calculated avoidance of his allies and his Party in those critical hours, although, as we have seen, he may well have come away from the Brighton interview with a suspicion that the Liberal leaders would not be too grossly offended if their virtue was surprised by the *fait accompli* of his re-election. But was it impossible for the Liberal leaders even yet to undeceive him as to this suspicion

of their infirmity of purpose—if, indeed, their purpose was no longer infirm? There were still twenty-four precious hours in which at least to make their decision reach him before a shot was fired. Mr. Morley relied upon Parnell's secretary and upon Justin McCarthy—most lovable but most easy-going of men and, in semi-revolutionary politics, most ineffectual—for this delicate office, and when they reported a difficulty in finding Parnell, did nothing but wring his hands while the golden sands were running out. Parnell's address must have been known to most officials and probably to thousands of residents in Brighton. An early morning train would have enabled him either to force an interview, or at least to liberate his own soul of any whisper of remorse. He was quite obviously the man to impress the Irish leader with the change of the situation since the evening at the Hôtel Métropole, a bare fortnight before, when he was doing worship to him as the Irish King-maker of the future, and when, as he avows, Sir George Lewis had already told him the worst that was to be known of the brief against Parnell. The issues were too tremendous to shy at small points of dignity. Even short of a visit to Brighton, he had the machinery of the Opposition Whips at his service to apprise Parnell the moment he reached the House of Commons of the desperate urgency of an interview before

he entered the party meeting at two o'clock. The still more effective expedient of going down to the House of Commons himself did occur to him, but at an hour when he might well have guessed it would be too late. When he reached the House "a little after three," the party meeting had been over for an hour, and he found Parnell, the re-elected Irish leader, in the thick of a congratulatory group of friends in the Lobby. Poor McCarthy had, indeed, gently delivered his missive to his leader in the bustle of the party meeting, without one chance in a thousand of its alarming Parnell—if, indeed, it did not confirm his suspicion that it was another sly move of the Old Parliamentary Hand to save his personal responsibility—while the unfortunate Party were left wholly unaware of the sword hanging over their heads. Parnell "came forward with much cordiality" to greet the belated Chief Secretary and "as we went along the corridor to Gladstone's room, he informed me in a casual way that the Party had again elected him chairman."

One resource remained—to keep out of the newspapers, until both sides clearly understood one another. Here came in the second and worst fault of the Liberal leaders—the first in which Gladstone himself was the chief offender. In his wrath at the Irish leader's obduracy he would have his letter (the letter, be it remembered, out of which

he would fain have struck the one operative sentence) "published at once, that very afternoon"—in a special edition of Stead's *Pall Mall* if it could be done. The Chief Secretary induced him to delay a few hours; but the effect was to throw the Lobby into a wilder fever by the circulation of all sorts of panic-stricken rumours as to the contents of the letter.

Lord Morley for the first time gives us his impressions of that tragic evening of uncertainties.

"Then Harcourt, Arnold and I went to dinner. News of the letter swiftly got out. Two or three Irish members came in much excitement to my table to know if the story of the letter was true, and, above all, if Mr. Gladstone had really said, and really meant it, that he would withdraw from the leadership. I said very little, and begged them to get the letter itself from the reporters. Tremendous sensation and panic among the Irishmen all night. Parnell sat sullenly in the smoke-room, and would no more consent to go to the meeting which they proposed to hold than Barnardine would consent to go with Abhorson to be hanged."

The comparison is one which, if it came from any less fastidious pen, would seem to be in indifferent taste. It was in the circumstances a heartless thing to say both of the

great man with whom he had been glad to hold friendly colloquy twice upon that day, and of the distracted Party whom he coldly referred to the reporters for information of what had happened, and who, if they were like Abhorson executioners, were executioners at his call and without even being answered when they came to know "if Mr. Gladstone had really said, and *really meant it*, that he would withdraw from the leadership." It was a case for a plain tale, and the Englishman whom Ireland trusted most after, if not before, Gladstone wrapped himself in an Olympian haze as impenetrable as Parnell's own. Nay, when he spoke at all, it was to leave Parnell and his adherents under the impression that in his own view it was better for Ireland to be united in the wrong than divided in the right. It was indeed from the doctrine thus enunciated that Mr. Redmond, in after-years, appropriated his own unlucky apophthegm: "Better be united in following a foolish and short-sighted policy than divided in following a far-seeing and wise one"—the doctrine which led him and his followers to a so-called Home Rule Act, the repeal of which is now (in 1918) the only point on which all parties in Ireland are united.

One stroke of madness begat another. There followed, discharge after discharge, with little more reflection than moves the barrels of a machine-gun—Parnell's retort

in his reckless Manifesto, the savageries in Committee Room 15, the splitting asunder of Ireland to its foundations, and, to borrow from a still more hapless Chief Secretary—a ten years' "hell." For one host of honest Irishmen it became a fight between Bellerophon and the bloody-mouthed Chimæra; for another, and still more passionate host, the conspiracy of a pusillanimous or debauched Party "to throw to the English wolves" their irreplaceable leader.

Lord Morley makes sympathetic reference to the difficulties of the six members absent in America, the attitude of two of whom, "the most important of all after Mr. Parnell himself, was felt to be a decisive element." "Few men," he justly says, "have ever been placed in sharper difficulty." If even Irish members in the House of Commons were left groping for themselves as to what had happened behind the scenes, their colleagues in America had no information beyond the shock captions of the New York sensation sheets. One of them expressed his own judgment of what the emergency required in Cincinnati the night Gladstone's letter was published:

"All we have got to do in this crisis is to keep our heads cool and go on steadfastly with our work with the firm confidence that Mr. Parnell and the representatives of Ireland, in frank and friendly consultation

with Mr. Gladstone and the rest of our hitherto faithful allies, will determine upon the course—whatever it may be—that is wisest in the interest of Ireland."

They had been dragged against their will into the precipitate action of the Leinster Hall meeting in the belief that, the Liberal Ex-Lord Chancellor and the Liberal Ex-Attorney-General being two of its chief promoters, it represented the result of the "frank and friendly consultation" between Gladstone and Parnell thus desiderated. It was Parnell's Manifesto, definitely breaking off the Liberal alliance on grounds of perfidy to the Home Rule Clause which, so far as concerned Gladstone and Mr. Morley, were to their own knowledge shockingly unjust, that determined them, and alone could have determined them, to separate themselves from their leader in his hour of stress. It is certain they would never have despatched their Manifesto if they could have read the narrative Lord Morley here gives to the public; for they would have known that Gladstone's own instinct warned him against obeying the clamour to proclaim as pariahs Parnell and all who stood with him; that there was no real weight of evidence that, even from the electioneering standpoint, the clamour would be more than, in Parnell's own words to Mr. Morley, "a storm in a teacup"; that Lord Spencer,

weightiest of councillors on Irish affairs, was opposed to putting any coercive pressure at all upon Parnell or upon Ireland; that Chamberlain himself was of the opinion that the thing to do was "to keep quiet"; and that, in fact, only for the still inexplicable interposition of Mr. Morley, of all men, the scenes of Committee Room 15 would never have been enacted. Where blunders were pretty equally divided, they would assuredly have still insisted it was a case for "frank and friendly consultation," and not for major excommunications, unforgivable recriminations, and red ruin for both sides.

Their first impulse, of course, would have been to return home to consult with their colleagues and their countrymen. But they had no power of freely meeting either one or the other without first undergoing their sentences of six months' imprisonment. They did, indeed, make a last desperate effort for a composition of misunderstandings which, it is now clear, were temperamental rather than organic. Although they could get no nearer to the heart of affairs than France, and had to battle against a tide of boiling passion in which all heed of the future seemed to be lost amidst the screams of the Furies: "No compromise! Give no quarter to the man! Strike home, strike hard, and strike often!" it is now pretty well recognised history that a peace treaty might have been had, and was only thwarted at the fifty-

ninth minute of the final hour by a lamentable personal *contretemps* which the present writer has narrated elsewhere.[1] The irreconcilables had their ten years of torments in which to repent at leisure, and the peacemakers had to resign themselves to the usual reward of being impartially misunderstood and reviled in both camps as "Whigs" for believing, what ten years afterwards everybody believed, that both Parnell and Gladstone ought to be, might have been, preserved; even as one of the two was misunderstood and reviled as "a Tory" during fifteen subsequent years for urging that reconciliation with Ulster, which his adversaries, Irish and English, are now grasping at as a last chance of salvation.

Sinn Fein will be able to draw from these two volumes a mournful argument of racial incompatibilities. Here is easily the first of living English Men of Letters for whom, as he says, "Ireland was his polestar," and here is a people believing, as we now know, to excess in his devotion to their cause; and it now turns out the Irish people knew their Mr. Morley as superficially as he makes it distressingly evident he himself knew Parnell or Parnell's countrymen after a four years' reign in the Chief Secretary's Lodge. The Irish people will learn with a gasp that, so late as 1882, seven years after Parnell's work

[1] *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, p. 44. (Macmillan, 1910.)

began, three years after the foundation of the Land League, Mr. Morley returned from his first visit to Ireland to write: "My visit has not made me any headlong convert to Repeal or even Autonomy"; that of Chamberlain, Ireland's most venomous enemy once she declined to be his pawn in the game, he tells us "for thirteen years we lived the life of brothers"; that Mr. Balfour is the only living man to whom he chants a hymn of unbroken praise, not to say adulation, and with whom it is his pride to have been an intimate even while Gladstone was making the heavens ring with his cry of "Remember Mitchelstown!"; and that his friendship with Gladstone himself began only shortly before the formation of the Ministry of 1885, when the Old Man was already far advanced in the 'seventies. The keenest shock of all will be for the leaders of the Irish Majority Party when they learn that Mr. Morley was a principal personage in the movement to replace Gladstone by Lord Rosebery, and remember how easily they might have baulked the design if they had only guessed that Gladstone fought to the last for a Dissolution, or, at the least, for the premiership of Earl Spencer. It was possibly their stupidity which led them to very opposite inferences as to Mr. Morley's real attitude towards the movement for the removal of "Mr. G.," but their mistake was also to some extent due to half-con-

fidences of the same Delphic dubiety as those which led both Parnell and his Party to draw mistaken inferences with respect to his view of the Divorce Court proceedings. For Irishmen, the Gladstone tragedy makes scarcely less poignant reading than the Parnell tragedy of five years earlier.

Mr. Morley was equally at sixes and sevens in his impressions about Ireland. Edmund Burke appears to be the only Irishman he ever really loved. About Parnell he makes so shallow a remark as this:

"Apart from the business of the moment he contributed little to ordinary conversation, because, among other reasons, he had no knowledge, not even the regular knowledge of common education, and the man of the world."

And all because Parnell resolutely stuck to "the business of the moment," and because his own hobbies happened to be matter-of-fact sciences like geology, astronomy, trigonometry and chemistry, rather than the slightly sub-acid table-talk of politicians, philosophers, and literary gents at the Athenæum Club where some great minds seem to find their heaven. Lord Morley scarcely cares to disguise from us that he has a poor opinion of "diabolic" Irish politics, whether Unionist or Nationalist; of Irish writings; even of Irish scenery,

which he finds "unquiet" in comparison with the sleepy green folds of Wordsworth's Lake country. It may well be cited as one of the most piquant of "life's little ironies" that the strongest personal charm for him of Home Rule for Ireland (which, after all, *fait les frais* of his entire political career, including the Indian Home Rule, which was only an Asiatic corollary) seems to have been that Englishmen need see or hear of all these things no more.

CHAPTER X

PARNELL AND AFTERWARDS

PARNELL, who died thirty-five years ago the most forlorn of men, has survived as the most commanding figure of his day unto a generation who have begun to forget his adversaries—perhaps the very greatest of them as well as the small ones. He looms large in the affairs of these two countries after the Irish Party who consented to dethrone him have worse than ceased to exist, and the British Party, who blundered into ordering his dethronement, are in little better case. And one of "The Curiosities of Politics" is that Mr. St. John Ervine's hero a hero will remain for wholly different reasons from those which are attracting a considerable number of the public to read his book.[1] He moulded one English Party after another to the acceptance of a programme which, when he began, was, in the eyes of the average Briton, Whig or Tory, a black crime against the Empire. It was Parnell who really repealed Pitt's Act of

[1] *Parnell*, by St. John Ervine. (London: Benn, 1925. 12*s*. 6*d*. net.)

Union, against which O'Connell had raged for half a century as vainly as the Atlantic foam against his Kerry cliffs. However devoutly Britons may pray to be delivered from any further island noises from beyond the Irish Sea, they cannot hope to escape from the new problems presented by the dismemberment of Ireland, and these problems would never have arisen if Parnell had been listened to, and if the Home Rule settlement had been effected under his master hand, instead of waiting to be fixed up by the rude diplomacy of insurrection.

The pity is that while he grows and grows in bulk, it is not the true Parnell, but a phantasy of the bookwriters that bemuses the honest Briton. His latest biographer, brilliant in the display of his dramatic gifts, distinguishes himself still more by a profound unacquaintance with his original in which he need yield to no man. His narrative is for much the greater part a more richly seasoned *réchauffé* of the out-of-date scribblings of book-makers, some of whom never laid their eyes on Parnell, and none of whom assuredly shared an hour of his political intimacy. We have Parnell's small jokes about the unluckiness of the colour green, and his horror of travelling in a railway compartment numbered thirteen, or any multiple of thirteen, reheated as though a crank or a madman lurked somewhere in the background of an intellect that

used the most robustly minded of British Ministers as his pawns, and made the House of Commons his footstool. The Man of Mystery, of course, reappears in his most fetching cloak and conspiratorial whisper, although anybody who was on more than nodding terms with Parnell could have told the author that he was the least theatrical of men and the least greedy of self-advertisement. I, for one, never saw him in a theatre and neither, I suspect, did anybody else, except in the one recorded instance of Mrs. O'Shea; he never courted a newspaper, and was so insensible to the arts now represented by the Kodak or the kinema, before which no King or Prime Minister dares veil his face, that he did the world the real wrong of evading the request for a sitting for an immortal picture or sculpture at the hands of the most renowned of the Victorian men of genius; the only mystery he practised was the endeavour to conceal his address, which was one of his shrewd precautions against assassination as well as a defence, such as it was, against the blackmailers and the newspaper moralists, who thought it decent to spy upon his private life. Whatever he achieved, he achieved not by the pitiful thaumaturgy of the mystery-man, but with weapons of honest steel, by force of strong psychic vision of his purposes, and a pertinacity which nothing could daunt and no bribe could buy off except some

solid concession for his country; this bribe he never hesitated to accept, however unideal a concession it might seem—for the moment.

The Divorce Court is naturally a precious "property" in a drama of this type. It need only be observed here that the Irish people have long agreed to avert their eyes from the nauseous adventure with the O'Sheas as the morbid consequence of a craving for womanly companionship in an immeasurably lonely life, and want to hear no more of how Parnell became entangled in the affairs of that miserable household beyond what we know from the astounding confession of the heroine as to how and why she first hunted him down in the House of Commons. There is another matter which they will less easily forgive. One cannot help regretting that Mr. St. John Ervine should have disfigured what his severest critics will own to be a pretty piece of dramatic literature by burrowing so largely for his "copy" amidst the private afflictions of a family famed for centuries of benevolent and incorruptible devotion to Ireland.

The Irish Parliamentary Party are fair game—"the Seceders" and "the Irish Wolves" of Mr. St. John Ervine's most flaming pages. It is all the easier for them to be more tolerant of his fanciful descriptions of their chief and themselves than Mr. St. John Ervine finds it possible to be towards

his own countrymen, because they know he writes of another man and another world than those who knew Parnell ever came to know. The sparse survivors of the Parnell Party of the unpaid years of calumny and stress have a comforting suspicion that their dead comrades and themselves will be judged by those whose judgment counts to have been—human frailty apart—as disinterested, as heroically disciplined and as successful a young soldier band as any ever vouchsafed to a nation which could make no return except one of affection for their pay. They will be able to read with a smile the latest re-edition of the familiar compliments to their quarrelsomeness, their bad language, and their mercenary ingratitude during the years of mortal struggle when they were sacrificing their all to attest the faith of Ireland in the honour of English allies, but for the clumsiness and uncandour of one of whom, it is now known and on his own authority, the Parnell Split would never have taken place. The consequence of being obliged to paint Parnell as the play-actor he most certainly never was, and the author's own blissful ignorance of the whole subject, is that Mr. St. John Ervine sat down to write his drama, as he naïvely confesses, ready to write him down a hero or a villain All his readers will rise with an overwhelming sense of Parnell's greatness, but in some bewilderment whether to believe, with Mr. St. John

Ervine, that he played a god-like Paris to a particularly odious Menelaus, or whether the usually benign critic of *The Times Literary Supplement* is right in finding in him (it is actually so written !) "a monster," or, whether again, both may not be equally astray in their conception of the authentic Parnell, and are not rather dealing with stage-craft than with sober history.

The real objection to the book is that Mr. St. John Ervine either ignores, or has never heard of, the revelation which has revolutionised the whole story of the responsibility for the Parnell Split. Morley's *Life of Gladstone* he has read and quotes from, but his pages give no evidence that he ever heard tell of Viscount Morley's *Recollections*, divulging the facts which were somehow omitted from the *Life of Gladstone*, but which give us the true master-key of the Parnell tragedy. It seems incredible, but the fact stands, that while the dainty dishes of Committee Room 15 are served up in all their spicy nastiness from debates which were in far the greater degree solemn and creditable, there is not a word of the episode which set Committee Room 15 going. It was the "nullity of leadership" passage in the Gladstone manifesto which undoubtedly at one and the same time infuriated the Parnellites with the cry of "English dictation," and seemed for the moment completely to justify "the Seceders"; and Mr.

St. John Ervine apparently has no inkling of the truth that, as all readers of the *Recollections* now know, both of them were equally right and equally wrong, through no fault of their own. All that it is necessary to recall here, and upon Morley's own authority, is that (1) Gladstone's genuine judgment was: "I think it plain that we have nothing to say and nothing to do in the matter. . . . It was wholly the business of Ireland," and in reply to the electioneering exhortation of the sainted Harcourt that "the party would expect" a major excommunication of Parnell with bell, book, and candlelight, he cried out: "What! Because a man is what is called leader of a party, does that constitute him a judge and accuser of faith and morals? I will not accept it. It would make life intolerable." That (2) after Gladstone had been bull-dozed (there is no other word for it) into writing that the retention of Parnell would reduce his own leadership to a nullity, he deliberately struck the passage out upon second thought, and only consented to restore it at the dictation of Morley standing over his chair, the rest of his cabinet colleagues being present, but being kept in the dark until Morley had carried off the manuscript thus doctored to the Press and thrown the Irish and English worlds into a blaze; that (3) upon the first awful rumours of the publication reaching the unfortunate Irish members they "came

in much excitement to my [dinner] table to know if the story of the letter was true, and, above all, if Mr. Gladstone had really said, *and really meant it*, that he would withdraw from the leadership"; and the man who was trusted as the Irish members' surest ally, far from avowing, as he did twenty-seven years after, that "the story of the letter" was "*not* true, and that Gladstone did *not* mean it," dismissed them with this heartless comment: "I said very little and begged them to get the letter itself from the reporters. Tremendous sensation and panic among the Irishmen all night." It would doubtless be an insult to suggest that if Mr. St. John Ervine's eye had fallen upon confessions such as these he would have suppressed them in order to be free to advance the extraordinary proposition: "and so this imperious man fell, not before the English wolves, but before the wolves of Ireland."

N'insistons pas. The incident will doubtless receive further elucidation from the stores of still unused information in the possession of General Morgan and of Mr. Gardiner, the biographer of Harcourt. Few men of reflection, who are not as innocent as Mr. St. John Ervine of any knowledge of Morley's *Recollections*, will henceforth be in much doubt that, if he had been as frank in his dealings with the Irish members on that night as he is in his autobiography, the Irish Party would never have been split, and the

Liberal Party never condemned to share its fate. My present object is less to endeavour to correct Mr. St. John Ervine's misconceptions of the men and of the events he is dealing with than to make my own humble contribution to the all-but-wholly-unknown evidence of the comparative ease with which a calamity, the extent of which is only now beginning to be understood in the two countries, might have been avoided, even after the Gladstone manifesto and the Parnell retort had done their first maddening work, and while we were still left uninformed, and, indeed, misinformed, concerning what the world now knows to be the most vital factor in compelling the Parnell Split.

I can only speak at first hand for the six Delegates of the Irish Party whom the explosion in Committee Room 15 found marooned on a lecturing tour in the United States; two of us being debarred, in addition, from landing in Ireland or England by unpurged sentences of six months' imprisonment. It would be nonsense to pretend that our decision was produced by the repulsive adventure with the O'Sheas with which the audience in Mr. St. John Ervine's dress circle are so richly entertained. The Irish people's abhorrence of sexual immorality was no more in question than was that of the people of England when they permitted Lady Hamilton's Nelson to win the battle of

Trafalgar as their Lord High Admiral. Our action was inspired by an overwhelming sense of the interests of a country for which the destruction or the fruition of the hopes of thirty years of direst suffering was at stake.

It was not even the news, heavy as would be the blow, that Gladstone was about to disappear, unless Parnell consented to be the first to make the sacrifice, that in itself could have decided us; it was the impossibility of identifying ourselves with the imputations of treachery and personal dishonesty on the part of Gladstone and Morley in Parnell's manifesto which we believed in our souls to be atrociously unjust, but as to which one of these two men has since made it clear Parnell was not the only or even the worst sinner.

If the representations on which the American Delegates acted were well founded, viz. that Parnell's re-election on the morrow of the proceedings in the Divorce Court must involve the instant disappearance of Gladstone and Home Rule—we should have no apology to make to our own consciences, *much less elsewhere, for our action.* We were on the eve of a General Election, which no party doubted must return a Liberal Home Rule Government to power by a majority not far from 150. The Home Rule majority was 42, even after Ireland had been torn for two years with the con-

vulsions of the Parnell Split, and the Liberal Party scarcely less weakened by the disloyal intrigues against Gladstone and his Irish commitments. For all his many affectations of success, Mr. Balfour had shot his last bolt, and was, in the eyes of all men behind the scenes, overthrown. The people of Britain were yearning for a chance of crowning Gladstone's last days with triumph for the Irish policy which, thirty years later, Unionists, Liberals, and Labourites were to unite to force upon Ireland, although the belated concession was to be accompanied by a new affront to Irish sentiment from which the Home Rule of Gladstone-cum-Parnell would have spared us. It has now been found out, on the best of all British authorities on the subject, that we pronounced without a full knowledge of the facts—one shrinks from the suggestion of a downright falsification of the facts. Gladstone's abandonment of the leadership, with which the world was ringing, was a false alarm. The great old man's decision, so long as it was his own, was in a diametrically opposite direction. There was only one man from whom the unimaginable story of how the Gladstone manifesto was concocted would have been credible, and that was John Morley—a *preux chevalier* more stainless than Gladstone himself in Irish eyes—but his was the representation on which a generation of men were led blindfolded. It is certain that if the American

Delegates could have read the Irish pages of the *Recollections* that night in Chicago, not one of them would have put his signature to their deed of separation from Parnell. It is nearly as certain that if the unfortunate Irish members who importuned their trustiest English friend at the Harcourt dinner-table for some news of their fate could only have guessed the secret of his reticence, the requisition calling the panic-stricken meeting to rescind Parnell's re-election would not have received the signature of a single man of the eighty-four members, and Split there could have been none.

All was not even yet lost. The obvious sense of the situation, were we free men, would be to postpone any pronouncement of our own, and advise the Irish Party to suspend all controversy until the American Delegates should have had time to return home and take counsel with their colleagues. Such a message may seem a little high-and-mighty in the eyes of a new generation, who are quite incapable of measuring the strength of the forces then on the brink of conflict; but nobody who lived in those times, and few who will take the pains of examining contemporary evidence, will doubt that such a request from the American Delegates at that moment would have been received with respect and relief by both sections of a Party still uncommitted by a vote, and would in any case be insisted upon with practical

unanimity by a race hungering of all things for the preservation of national unity. Whatever subsequent years of misunderstanding and obloquy did to divide us and to eat away the influence of both of us, it is not vanity, but elementary truth, to claim that Mr. Dillon and I represented at that hour in the eyes of our countrymen the national fighting force—and the only active fighting force—which for the previous five years had grappled with and got the better of the coercive power of England under the most dreaded of her proconsuls. Had we been at liberty to exert ourselves in the council-chamber of the Party and on the platforms of the country, the advice we might ultimately find reason to formulate would have been quite certainly endorsed by Archbishop Croke and Archbishop Walsh, who had not yet spoken, and strengthened by Parnell's conviction that at all events my own conclusion, whatever it might be, would be free from any bias except that of affectionate tenderness for his own greatness. Our advice must have ended by prevailing in Ireland and amongst all those British Liberals who were not already welcoming the occasion as one for shuffling off Gladstone and Home Rule in shuffling off Parnell. The American Delegates, even only counting heads, would have been all but numerous enough to turn the scale if it had to come to be a question of ascertaining the majority in a division.

But we were not free. We were more effectually shackled than Mr. Balfour had ever succeeded in shackling us in his jails. We were by the Tipperary sentences removed from the scene, either in Ireland or Westminster, for the lapse of six months, during which the discord begun in Committee Room 15 was fated to go on widening until it was irreparable. The Delegates satisfied themselves easily enough that interference by cablegram from America could lead to nothing but half-understandings and confusion worse confounded. They were all agreed that, instead of risking the addition of further fuel to the flames, our duty was to avail ourselves of the one advantage our detachment from the passions of Committee Room 15 left to us, and unite in a supreme effort to reach Parnell and his principal Irish and Liberal adversaries by a delegation to France. The misfortune, I am afraid, was that the entire body of the Delegates was not despatched to France, rather than allow the whole weight of responsibility to be thrown upon the shoulders of Mr. T. P. Gill and myself. The ground upon which men of so much importance as Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor avoided the duty was the desirability of retaining the rest of the Delegates in America to resume the appeal for funds with the *éclat* which a successful composition of the quarrels in Westminster would impart

to the American mission. It was not sufficiently remembered that immeasurably the most important and the most difficult consideration was the success of the mission in France. The Delegates who remained behind found themselves frozen up in their New York hotel under the ban of an inglorious boycott, recognising that they would have no audience anywhere for discourse upon any other subject unless the mission to France prospered, while, if it did, Irish-American dollars in millions would flow into the lap of the peacemakers.

The separation of the Delegates led to new complications. Our instructions as to the conciliatory proposals we were to make to Parnell were reduced to writing in minute detail, with the assent of all the Delegates, and were never departed from in the smallest particular. While Mr. Gill and myself were on the seas, however, our colleagues in the Hoffman House allowed themselves to be betrayed into partisan rejoicings over Parnell's defeat at the Kilkenny election which were in sharp disaccord with the tenor of our written instructions. While our communications with a sensitive man like Parnell were in their most delicate phase, it was even telegraphed from America, from a source that was scarcely mistakable, that our colleagues in New York strongly disapproved of my efforts to reconcile Parnell to the acceptance of the conditions they had

themselves joined in drafting. The consequence was that, instead of having Parnell's counter-proposals immediately debated with the united strength of the American Delegates, we found our difficulties enormously increased by the rumours that a new split was developing, and after an interminable series of cablegrams to and from the Hoffman House, which were betrayed to the newspapers and shamefully distorted, Mr. Dillon found it necessary to do at last what he must now feel he ought to have done at first, and voyaged to France to ascertain for himself how matters stood.

What followed, as to which Mr. St. John Ervine does not evince the remotest knowledge, is set down in my book, *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, Chapters I–III (Macmillan, 1910). The accuracy of the narrative has never been challenged in a single particular from either side. All that need be repeated here of "the Boulogne negotiations"—and that only because it is the key to all the later history of the Irish Party and of their Liberal allies—is that, by the time Mr. Dillon reached France, Parnell had been induced to renounce the chairmanship and to consent to Mr. Dillon's election in his place, and that it was solely due to a piece of tactlessness on Mr. Dillon's own part—the most luckless in the course of a career of romantic promise which is not unfree from other and similar infelicities—

that Parnell was at the last moment re-estranged and our agreement brought to ruin. The error has been, perhaps, more than sufficiently atoned for in many a subsequent hour of reflection, and might now mercifully be dipped under the wave of Lethe but that it was the cause of the destruction of the last chance of saving Parnell from an end for ever to be mourned, or of saving his Party from perishing of a more prolonged, but no less pitiable, agony. The great Irishman was suffering from Bright's disease in a form which must, in any event, have put an end to his life in a year or two; but he might have died surrounded by the undiminished affection and gratitude of his race, without a shadow of the desperation or of the indignities which surrounded his death-bed. Better than all, his death might have been the signal for the second spring-time of a Party which was not yet irrevocably sundered, but which the tragedy of his last months sentenced to a quarter of a century of demoralisation, terminating in a not undeserved annihilation.

This was not, indeed, the only lion in the path of "the Boulogne negotiations." It is a curious fact that the pronouncement of the American Delegates raised up a new obstacle to peace more redoubtable than our difficulties with Parnell. As long as our intentions remained unpublished our power of urging—nay, of enforcing—counsels of

peace upon both sets of combatants was practically supreme. Once our decision was made known, and was followed by the pronouncement of the Bishops, more than one of the leaders of what was already beginning to be called the Anti-Parnellite Party, felt sufficiently sure of their ground to resent any further interference on our part that was not in unquestioning furtherance of their own methods. It became a question not of smoothing the way to Parnell's retirement, but (in the detestable jargon of the day) of "knifing" him now that he was supposed to be down. The jealousies of certain parliamentarians alive to the poor part they had played in Westminster during the four years of the Plan of Campaign fever, while their colleagues were bearing the brunt of the battle in the prisons, and in the eviction clearances in which all the passionate interest of Ireland was absorbed, began to make themselves heard in sneers at "the picturesque personalities" in New York—"the Kings over the water"—who still dared prate of peace with Parnell, when their only business was to follow *sans phrase* wherever "the men in the gap" at Westminster might lead the way.

From infantile jealousies of this kind Mr. Healy was almost entirely free. He did not shrink from taking his risks in some of the most moving crises of the Plan of Campaign wars. If he had never made

much disguise of his inability to suffer gladly one of "the picturesque personalities" against whom one of his brother "Antis" directed his shafts, his friendship for myself was genuine to the point of enthusiasm, and had never once been interrupted up to the time of the Parnell split. I have sometimes had my misgivings whether more patience on my own part and less irritation at recollection of an old grudge of his against Parnell and of some recent excesses of language might not have converted him from the most ferocious fighter in the Anti-Parnellite ranks to a peacemaker whose word would have been at the moment irresistible. The difficulty, it may now be avowed, was that I was only too painfully aware of the bitter personal quarrel that had long divided Parnell and himself. The precise cause of the quarrel he never communicated to me. All that is certain is that it came to a head in a message from Parnell forbidding him to join Joseph Chamberlain at a dinner-party which the Irish leader suspected to have been organised at a critical juncture as part of an intrigue against Gladstone and himself. The faults on Parnell's own side of the quarrel were wantonly aggravated by such acts of impolicy as refusing his brilliant lawyer-lieutenant a brief in the Parnell Commission trial. It was one of the tragedies of the situation that the opposition to Parnell at

Westminster should have at once devolved upon the only man towards whom Parnell harboured a resentment, and whose fearlessness singled him out from feebler men as the foremost fighter in the battle-front. The American papers, ablaze daily with the sickening personalities exchanged in Committee Room 15, left no room for doubt that the controversy was being debated in a spirit directly contrary to that we had ourselves recommended in dealing with a leader of irreplaceable value to the nation, and upon an issue, as it is now revealed, concerning which Parnell's opponents were fatally misinformed. It was with an uneasy knowledge how deeply the smothered fires of ill-will between the two men still burned that I cabled to the faithful friend whom I had left in charge of *United Ireland*, be the circumstances what they might, to "avoid all unkind language of Parnell personally and permit no outsider to interfere." But no precaution could any longer prevail in a state of violence and injustice which was already warming into a living hell *United Ireland* was taken forcible possession of in the Parnell interests by a mob of whom not a man had ever invested a penny, or written a line, or sacrificed an hour of his liberty in connection with the paper, which had been for nine years the storm-centre and citadel of resistance to English rule. The other side served me a no less disgraceful

turn by starting a newspaper in my name choke-full of the personal abominations concerning Parnell of which I had cabled my detestation, and of which the circulation through the country as "William O'Brien's Paper" wrought incalculable mischief when our mission of peace came to be the last hope of the country.

Where, then, comes in the reason for regret that I did not treat Mr. Healy's sensibilities with a more assiduous tenderness? A sentimental reason—an emotional one, if you will—but there was question of a man with whom sentiment, and emotionalism—black and sudden as a Killarney squall and as short-lived—had more complete mastery of his moods than in the case of any other man of superb talent I ever became acquainted with. While I was on the sea for France Mr. Healy and his friends founded a daily newspaper, *The National Press*, of which they nominated me the Editor and Managing Director. As this was done without any consultation or communication with me, the unexpected power placed in my hands of accepting or rejecting the control of a great daily newspaper supplied me with an enormous leverage in my peace mission which neither Parnellites nor anti-Parnellites could afford to disregard. Whether I turned the opportunity to the best account for peace' sake is a question which sometimes sets me pondering. At a moment when Parnell's

readiness to place himself in my hands was already sufficiently well known to alarm the no-compromisers who had burned their boats, Mr. Healy paid me a visit in Paris (in company, unfortunately, with one of the most virulent enemies of peace) on the sufficiently legitimate business of forcing my decision as to the editorship of the new paper, although he and his friends could scarcely have failed to know that my only reason for letting a day pass without rejecting the offer was the effect the uncertainty had on Parnell's mind at a moment when the fate of negotiations big with a quarter of a century of happiness or horrid discord was trembling in the balance. My hand was forced and Parnell's own unreasonableness reawakened.

Nevertheless, Mr. Healy was the only antagonist of an accommodation who mattered. When Parnell offered to give place to myself, as one in whose personal friendship his faith had never wavered, few who knew the relations of Mr. Healy and myself could doubt that he would have accepted that solution of the crisis, not merely with political resignation, but with an unfeigned joy. The least generous of cynics will understand why it is necessary to mention certain intimate matters of this kind if a glimmer of the truth relating to important events is ever to reach the public eye. When I came to insist upon the

substitution of Mr. Dillon, the difficulty both with Parnell and with Mr. Healy became enormously increased. The one thing on which both men were agreed was an unsparing opinion of his little vanities and an equally low—quite outrageously low—estimate of his intellectual calibre. But Parnell had never much difficulty in getting over his personal dislikes under a strong sense of public necessity. Only for one sentence of calamitous tactlessness on Mr. Dillon's own part, in the final interview at Calais, the difficulty as to his nomination to the chairmanship was at an end, so far as Parnell's hesitations were concerned.

The feelings of his chief advisers are sufficiently testified by three short quotations. John Redmond wrote:

"I am afraid John's interview with P. at Calais had *a very bad effect* and accounts for much of recent events. Ever since P. has been saying if *you* were to be the leader, as he originally strongly urged, the difficulties would be very small. I wish to God this could be so. I well know John would not be the one to object."

Tim Harrington wrote:

"His confidence in you is as strong as ever, but something must have gone very wrong at Calais. I think John said some-

thing to him about the funds in Paris which wounded him terribly . . . yet with all this I don't believe he is even yet averse to a settlement himself, if it was a matter of dealing with you."

Writing in *Sinn Fein* of one of my books (*Evening Memories*) Arthur Griffith said I knew more of Parnell and was more intimately trusted by him than any other man, and that he deplored his parting with me after the Boulogne negotiations more than the loss of all the rest of those whom he called "the Seceders."

Parnell's sentiments in my regard are revealed by the last letter I ever received from him, when the Boulogne negotiations were broken off:

"Private. "HOUSE OF COMMONS,
"LONDON, *Feb.* 11, 1891.

"MY DEAR O'BRIEN,

"In addition to the longer letter which I sent for publication, I desire to write to you a few words expressing how deeply I feel the kindness and gentleness of spirit which you have shown to me throughout these negotiations. I have felt all along that I had no right to expect from anybody the constant anxiety to meet my views or the intense desire that all proposals claiming your sanction should be as palatable as possible to me, which have so distinguished

your conduct of the communications between us. I know you have forgiven much roughness and asperity on my part and have made allowance for some unreasonable conduct from me, which to anybody gifted with less patience and conciliation than yourself would have been most difficult. I appreciate intensely the difficulties which have surrounded you in these negotiations, the constant and daily anxiety of which would have been overwhelming to anybody of less courage and devotion than yourself, and I fervently hope and believe that the prospects of Ireland are not as dark as you fear, and that, after a little time, having passed through these clouds and darkness, we may once again stand upon our former footing when in happier days we were comrades in arms on behalf of a united Ireland.

"My dear O'Brien, always yours,

"CHAS. S. PARNELL."

Had Parnell given way, Mr. Healy's objection would have yielded in an impulse of generosity as compelling as that which caused him to break down sobbing in the midst of one of his brainstorms in Committee Room 15, to hold out a hand of peace to his broken chief. Our relations in Paris were those of perfect correctitude, but it was not so much an occasion for diplomacy as for heart-to-heart confidences between seasoned

old comrades. I think now it would scarcely have been in vain if I had concentrated all my strength in an appeal to the memories of the long march we had made together out of the land of Egypt under a Moses never to be replaced, and to a generosity I had invariably found to be the end of Mr. Healy's most blustering attempts to seem merciless.

It is the fashion of politicians with uneasy memories to decry all reference to "what might have been" as a waste of public attention. By means of this suggestion the truth about an entire generation of Irish history has been suppressed by the mobs and the newspapers of the factions among whom the kingdom of Parnell was divided. "A bubble and a squeak and all is over" was the wisdom of one eminent Liberal journal impatient that Irishmen should lose a day about throwing their leader overboard at Boulogne. Thirty-five years have passed, and all is not yet over—except with the Irish Party that obeyed the hint and with the Liberal Party in whose supposed interest the incitement was uttered. As time goes on it will be ever plainer that the afflictions which have since been laid upon the backs of the Irish people are traceable to two blunders of not more than half a dozen politicians working upon an organised popular ignorance too sad for words. The first was the want of foresight that proclaimed it an unforgivable treason for us to make any attempt to prevent

the fate of Parnell from becoming a settled poison in the blood of the country. Who will repeat that "Boulonging" catch-cry now? The other was committed when, after eight years of hellish strife, the people made peace for themselves in the ranks of the United Irish League, without much countenance from the members of Parliament of any faction, and within four years of their reunion abolished Landlordism and stirred the hearts of the best of the Irish Unionists for a Home Rule settlement, at that time less beset with perplexities than had been the task of the Land Conference, and in a country still undarkened by the faintest suggestion of a cleavage into two Irelands. The lesson of Boulogne was again forgotten. Certain ill-advised politicians, in whose despite the Split of 1890 had been healed, set out to devastate the newly-established unity of an all-but-unanimous country, and did so, of all sardonic ironies, as the high priests of National Unity and Majority Rule. It is by this time possible to contemplate with mansuetude, although not without a haunting sorrow, the campaign of unimaginable folly on which they employed their ten years of omnipotence at Westminster and in Ireland—the destruction of the Policy of Conciliation just as the golden shower of its blessings was only beginning to fall; the suspension for twenty years of the Abolition of Landlordism wherever their boycott could

enforce their designs; the substitution for the broad and tolerant Nationality of Wolfe Tone of a ubiquitous secret society, restricted to an exclusively Catholic membership, under the sanction of a Catholic sacramental test, with the result of alarming the Protestants of Ulster into preparations for an appalling civil war; and the final panic-stricken bargain made by the dregs of Parnell's denationalised and sectarianised Party, to buy off Sir Edward Carson with the Partition of Ulster, as part of the Home Rule Bill of 1916, to be followed two years afterwards by the deep disgrace and political execution of the entire body who had first consented to the mutilation.

There is no Irishman in his senses who will at this time of day offer a word of defence for those crazy doings. The happy-go-lucky good nature of Irishmen, who had none but the dimmest and most erroneous notion of what was happening during the years while their votes kept the architects of the Policy of Destruction in power, will perhaps be content to dismiss the evil-doers with the reflection that, grievous as was their sinning, still heavier was their fall. The moment the Hibernian Partitionists were compelled to render an account to their constituencies, they were bundled bodily out of Parliament and off the public stage, and the wealthy daily newspaper, which was their principal instrument of mischief, found its grave in

the Bankruptcy Court amidst the groans of its shareholders.

But it is not wise to forget that it took an armed revolution to cut out of the body politic a Parliamentarianism which had grown to be a cancer. That is what gave the young men of the Irish Revolution a hold upon their countrymen which it would be a grave mistake to suppose is yet broken. It is too soon for responsible men to dogmatise on the success or failure or the more probable evolution of an experiment based upon the unsure expedient of dividing an ancient nation into two Disunited States, and excluding from the Southern Legislature all but half the purely political representatives elected by the people. What may be affirmed as an already established fact is that no other man could have so well succeeded as Mr. Healy has done in setting the excessively delicate machinery of the new relations between the two islands to work without a jangle. His popularity has made him an equally acceptable *porte-parole* with Mr. Lloyd George the Radical, with Mr. Thomas the strong man of Labour, and with Mr. Amery the sympathetic Conservative. The qualities he once refused with a growl to display to anybody outside a strictly confidential circle of intimates have ripened into a large tolerance and a self-command almost outshining the wit and geniality which are the joy of all but the sourest of his

countrymen. That much ought to be said; the rest is still mist and doubt.

The demand for Mr. St. John Ervine's book gives us all a startling reminder that Parnell remains an even more powerful factor of contemporary Irish history to-day than he was when a more or less remorseful nation saw his coffin pass a generation ago. He lived to the eve of a resounding Home Rule victory, which it is doubtful whether the one-sided and vilely distorting evidence of the Divorce Court or the stupid malice of his enemies contributed most to forbid. That victory he would have been able to turn to account as no man who has come after him can hope to do. He would have done so with that mixture of the magic of the idealist and the firmness of the ruler of men which caused a race twenty millions strong to obey him, not as slaves obey their master, as the foolish will persist in cackling, but as a nation under the spell of a beloved deliverer, and it would have been done with a moderation which would long ago have made his English (and Irish) revilers blush for their silliness. It would be a sin of national despondency to suggest that this can never be again.

It was publicly asserted two years ago (*The Irish Revolution and How it Came About*, Chapter XXIX), and has never been seriously denied, that Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith only signed the Downing Street

Articles of Agreement on the undertaking of the two most important members of the Coalition Cabinet that the Boundary Commission would be so arranged as to transfer the counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh, and South Armagh, with the great towns of Derry, Enniskillen, and Newry to the Free State, thereby giving Sir James Craig and his remaining three counties no choice but to follow them. The secret undertaking of Messrs. Winston Churchill and Lloyd George was never a viable one, and as soon as the Parish Boundary Commission has reported its foredoomed failure, the ingenuity of statesmen will be thrown back upon new negotiations and more creditable devices. The only way I can discern of avoiding an ultimate demand for the concession to a de-Partitioned Ireland of the Dominion right of amicable secession, if on mature experience she should so desire, is to return to those other methods of winning the assent of Ulster which were nearer to success than is generally suspected before the Northern Protestants were goaded to arms and an unendurable wound given to our national pride by the Partition bargain of the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1916. Should another Parnell arise in the new generation, he will possess unprecedented powers and opportunities so to shape the present situation that either the demand would not be made at all or the right would be exercised without a shadow of menace

to the safety of England or to the sensibilities of Ulster.

The leader of men of whom so much can be said a generation after he was buried a disgraced and beaten man is a hero, and not the hero of transpontine tragedy in whose habiliments Mr. St. John Ervine has chosen to deck him out.*

* Two months after the above passage was first published the Boundary Commission ended in the collapse predicted. The Free State has had to pay through the nose to procure the suppression of its Report, since, far from undoing Partition, the Commission coolly proposed to extend it. The result is a humiliation which cuts all Irish Nationalists of the old tradition to the quick, and completes the triumph of Sir James Craig. Article XII, which was the only remaining legal recognition (such as it was) of the unity of Ireland—Article XII on the strength of which Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith were cajoled into signing the original Agreement for a Treaty relying upon the Ministerial promise that it would be made the means of rendering the continuance of Partition impossible—the famous Article XII has been torn up as "a scrap of paper" by the hands and even at the entreaty of Collins' and Griffith's own friends and successors in office. Was there one of the five Republican delegates who would have

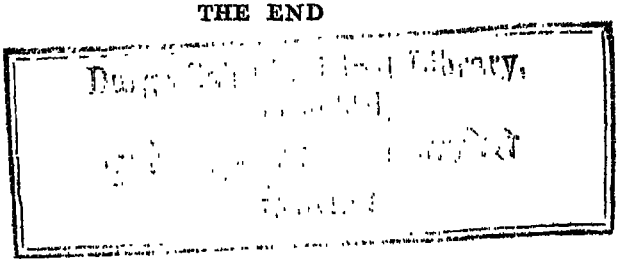
appended his signature to the Agreement could he have known then, what we all know now, of the fate of Article XII? Can there be a doubt that the Agreement would have been rejected by an all but unanimous vote in the Dail, where it was ratified by a bare majority of seven, even at a time when the belief in the Boundary Commission was still implicit in the minds of the credulous and while the Black and Tans were still knocking at the doors?

The negotiations for the new Treaty were more inexcusably mismanaged than were the negotiations for the old one. There was no Black and Tan spectre this time to daunt the war-weary. Another precious opportunity of retrieving the situation in England as well as in Ireland has been lost. The Policy of Conciliation of the All-For-Ireland League was summed up nine years ago in a sentence: "Any price for a United Ireland, but Partition—never under any possible circumstances!" Our notion of Conciliation after the Land Conference model was, by what we used to call "Compulsory Attraction," to draw our Protestant and Presbyterian countrymen to show themselves Irishmen first of all. The effect of the new Treaty is to do the very opposite, viz. to establish them as a permanent and, in the nature of the case, hostile English garrison in a larger English Pale than England ever before managed to maintain, and without

any serious motive of any kind, that I, at least, can conceive, for surrendering their position of privilege in order to be absorbed in a humiliated and impoverished "Southern Ireland."

The rejoicings of those who can discern here the elements of a genuine Irish Settlement will be of short duration. Parnell's cry, "We cannot give up a single Irishman!" will be found to be the soul of the aspirations of Post-Partition as well as of Pre-Partition Ireland. The Republicans, however helpless they may for the moment seem to be, have been placed by the new Treaty in the position of the true heirs of that legacy of Irish nationality for the sake of which some thirty generations of Irishmen have, in one form or another, waged an undying war. Regret it, as some of us greyheads may, it is with the Republicans the statesmen of England will have to settle accounts for the future.

THE END



Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.